



REASONS TO OPPOSE WAR

>>Ten pages of arguments and analysis inside



HUGE TUBE STRIKE SHOWS THE POWER OF WORKERS

RMT union fights for jobs >>Page 20

Socialist Worker

£1 | No 2794 | 2 - 8 March 2022 | socialistworker.co.uk

NO

- To Russia's Ukraine invasion
- To military escalation by Nato
- To more money for bloody war
- To imperialism everywhere

Keep fighting against Johnson

COST OF LIVING

Energy bills set to soar as fat cats rake it in

THE COST of living crisis took a new turn this week as fuel firms said the war in Ukraine could drive prices even higher than predicted.

Filthy rich energy companies are already writing to millions of people to tell them that average bills could soar to as much as £2,000 a year.

>>Page 7

ANTI-RACISM



New wave of refugees faces racist borders

THE UKRAINE war is exposing the hypocrisy of the Tories and governments across Europe over refugees.

The Tory government insists on keeping restrictions for refugees from Ukraine. And many of those who demand they are relaxed still want to keep other refugees out.

>>Pages 4&18

RADICAL WOMEN

Marie Equi—the 'queen of the Bolsheviks'

TO COINCIDE with International Women's Day, we continue our series on the lives of radical women.

This week, we tell the story of Marie Equi—a revolutionary, lesbian, and fighter for women's rights in the US.

>>Page 16



THE THINGS THEY SAY

'I do support that. That's something people can make their own decision about'

Foreign secretary **Liz Truss** says she's fine with British citizens going to Ukraine to fight

'There are a number of safe routes, not least our seasonal workers' scheme... which Ukrainians can qualify for'

Immigration minister **Kevin Foster** suggests those fleeing war apply to be fruit pickers

'It is certainly against every principle of international law... the world is fair, certainly Nato is fair'

Iraq and Afghanistan war architect, **Condoleezza Rice** agrees with a news host who said, "When you invade a sovereign nation, that is a war crime."

'This is the first major war between two civilised nations in my lifetime'

Conservative commentator **Michael Knowles** thinks the wars that wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were against 'uncivilised' peoples



ONE IT'S AN IMPERIALIST CONFLICT

MOST OF the media and politicians now talk about the war in Ukraine as if is entirely about the imperial ambitions of Russian president Vladimir Putin.

It's a disgrace, they say, to even suggest that the West, the US and its military alliance Nato are in the slightest bit responsible.

The Russian invasion is brutal and has to be opposed by everyone on the left. It would be a blow against imperialism if the Russians were defeated by the Ukrainian resistance.

But there would be no war if it wasn't for Nato and its expansion across eastern Europe over decades.

It's impossible to explain why the war is happening without talking about Nato. It's not just about who fired the first shot—but the process that led to war in the first place.

And that's all about the West and its own imperialist ambitions.

Extend

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, the US and Nato broke their promise that they would not expand into eastern Europe.

The US wanted to extend its own empire into parts of the world that Russia had left open. It tried to draw countries formerly part of the Soviet Union under its influence and direction.

So Nato joined and fuelled wars in the Balkans to try and manipulate governments friendly to the US and the West.

And in 2008 it agreed that Ukraine and Georgia should begin the process of becoming Nato members. That would mean two US-backed military powers right on Russia's border.

At the same time, the European Union (EU)—an economic rival to Russia—began trying to draw Ukraine closer towards it.

If Ukraine were to join Nato and the EU it would be a major prize for the US and the West.

It would give them more military power in eastern Europe—and better access to its vast sources of mineral wealth including oil, gas and coal.

Dominant

For its part, Russia has used its control of gas supplies to rebuild its power in Europe. The US, which is worried that its position as the dominant world power is falling, is desperate to stop anything that challenges it.

It's this competition between rival governments that leads to wars such as the one in Ukraine—and Nato is one of the key players.

The Western fiction of

FIVE REASONS WHY WE OPPOSE THE WAR

RUSSIAN MISSILES hit Ukrainian arms dump in Kiev last week

"humanitarian intervention" actually helps Putin to falsely claims to be acting on behalf of beleaguered "ethnic Russians" and democracy in Donetsk and Luhansk.

And it allows him to present the anti-war movement in Russia as supporters of Nato.

TWO NATO INTERVENTION WON'T HELP ORDINARY PEOPLE

NATO AND the European Union are using the crisis in Ukraine to prepare for further wars and are ramping up their military forces massively.

The British ministry of defence boasts, "Royal Navy ships, British Army troops, and Royal Air force fighters are arriving on new deployments in eastern Europe to bolster Nato's eastern front. RAF Typhoon fighter jets

are now patrolling Nato airspace over Romania and Poland."

Over 1,000 British soldiers and tanks have arrived in Estonia.

On Friday of last week, Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg activated, for the first time since it was created in 2003, parts of Nato's 40,000-strong "rapid reaction force".

They are going to Romania, Norway and other countries.

Germany has used Russia's invasion to carry through a transformation of its military policy.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz told a special session of the Bundestag on Sunday, "We are in a new era" as he unveiled an extra £90 billion this year for the military.

Germany has previously blocked Estonia sending German-made artillery to Ukraine.

Now it has agreed that transfer and for the Netherlands to send 400 German-made rocket-propelled grenades.

Soon after that, the German government said it would grant Ukraine missiles, armoured

vehicles, and 10,000 tons of fuel.

German foreign minister Annalena Baerbock, a member of the Green Party, said the country was making a "180-degree turn".

"Perhaps it is the case that Germany is today leaving behind a form of special restraint in foreign and security policy," she said.

European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen announced that "for the first time ever, the European Union will finance the purchase and delivery of weapons and other equipment to a country that is under attack" in a package worth nearly £400 million.

Non-lethal

The Irish government, long committed to official neutrality, said it would not send lethal equipment elements. But it "will provide a corresponding contribution to the provision of non-lethal support.

"Our understanding is that a number of Member States, including Austria and Malta, are likely to take the same approach."

Nato is not yet ready to commit troops directly to fight in Ukraine. But we can be almost sure that there are units of various "special forces" already there leaning lessons about urban warfare and assessing the Russian military. But the mobilisations that have already

taken place guarantee that even if the Russians are driven out Ukraine will be reduced to a puppet of the West.

Meanwhile ordinary people across Europe will be told that this emergency means less money for health and education, and more for the technology of death.

We oppose the Nato escalation and the money for war.

Join the
Stop the War Coalition
day of action

Sunday 6 March
Events across Britain, including London 12 noon, BBC, Portland Place, W1A 1AA
●Details of your local protest at bit.ly/STW0603



THREE MAINSTREAM MEDIA WANT TO MANIPULATE PUBLIC OPINION

BRITISH MEDIA coverage of Ukraine is designed to shore up support for "our nation" against Russia. And to help the process, the press want to combine their usual prejudices with new ones they are in the process of inventing.

The Daily Mail's coverage last week of a Chechen special forces "kill squad" is an example.

The squad it featured is made up of primarily Muslim soldiers. The paper's idea is to connect Muslims directly to the most violent part of the invasion.

We're flooded with pictures of Ukrainian solidarity, such as

Downing Street lighting up blue and yellow, but with limited coverage of the reality on the ground.

Ordinary people rightly want to show support for those opposing the Russian invasion. But it is very hard to find reliable reports from Ukraine. A tank that ran over a car with a man inside hit headlines as an "outrage" act of murder by Russian forces.

What didn't hit headlines is the claim that the tank was actually Ukrainian.

Many are comparing Russian president Vladimir Putin to Hitler.

Not many outlets have noticed the occasional far right and pro-Nazi flags supporting pro-Ukraine protests, such as red and black flags that venerate those who cooperated with Hitler.

And the racism of the mainstream media keeps seeping through.

One CBS correspondent said Ukraine was, unlike conflicts in

have deadly consequences. A mistake, military setback or a provocation in a conflict such as Ukraine could push one side into considering a "nuclear option".

And that could be a trigger to a wider war. Nuclear weapon arsenals are now so enormous that if imperialist forces are determined to use them they will wipe out the planet.

There were approximately 13,080 nuclear warheads in January 2021 with almost 90 percent of them owned by the US and Russia.

Britain has 225 nuclear warheads, 120 of them on its Trident nuclear submarines.

This potential for barbarism is where capitalists and imperialists have brought us to. Russia's announcement does not necessarily mean the weapons will be used.

But nuclear threats—and the

FOUR REAL WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

VLADIMIR PUTIN has ordered Russia's nuclear warheads be put on a "special regime of combat duty".

That raises the appalling vision of war fought with weapons that could end humanity.

Putin said the move was in response to "aggressive statements" by Nato forces.

The US, with its huge nuclear arsenal, hypocritically denounced the move as an "unacceptable escalation".

Unfortunately, nuclear threats are nothing new.

In the continuous arms race between competing nations, a move by one force triggers a reaction by another. This can

FIVE PEOPLE AND PROTESTS HAVE POWER

ANTI-WAR protests across Russia offer a different vision of how to tackle Vladimir Putin and his war. Despite intense state repression, the demonstrations could be a lightning rod for wider discontent.

The round up of activists is sign of fear in the regime.

Police and secret services have made up to 6,000 arrests in 60 cities according to the monitoring group OVD.

During protests in the capital, Moscow and St. Petersburg last week, chants of "No to war," were heard. In smaller cities and before the larger demonstrations were called, lone protesters who unveiled

leader Alexei Navalny. Navalny's supporters make up a large section of the current anti-war protests.

Denis described the anti-war movement as a "big step forward for the conservative Russian society".

"This means that the protests will be massive and will continue either until the war is over, or until Putin's secret police repress all the most active participants," he said.

Putin's repressive government outlawed demonstrations without a permit. It means those who are brave enough to publicly speak out can face imprisonment of up to five years and heavy fines.

A government spokesman said the protesters have no right to protest, but added, "There are citizens who have their own point of view. Clearly we should do a better job explaining things to them."

If the anti-war movements in Russia can

Iraq or Afghanistan, "a relatively civilised" place, "where you wouldn't expect that".

An Al Jazeera English presenter described Ukrainians fleeing war as "prosperous, middle class people". These are families "that you would live next door to", unlike refugees in the Middle East or North Africa.

doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction—have been a constant of war since the end of the Second World War.

Since 1945 the US has threatened, discussed and drawn up plans for the use of nuclear weapons over 200 times.

This included threats to Cuba in 1962, Vietnam in 1968, during the Arab-Israeli war in 1973 and to Iran in 1980. "Controlled escalation" is a central principle of Nato doctrine.

As weapons develop there is less distinction between conventional and nuclear escalation.

grow to mass protests and strikes it has the potential to win. It could cause a crisis for Putin.

For more from Russia go to bit.ly/Russia2022

Get in touch with
Socialist Worker



Email reports@socialistworker.co.uk

Web www.socialistworker.co.uk

Facebook "Socialist Worker (Britain)"

Twitter @socialistworker



Newsdesk
020 7840 5656

Circulation
020 7840 5601



Write to
Socialist Worker
PO Box 74955
London
E16 9EJ



New wave of refugees faces racism of Europe's borders

by ISABEL RINGROSE

THE FALLOUT of the Ukraine war is exposing the hypocrisy of the Tories and governments across Europe over refugees.

Up to three million Ukrainians could attempt to escape the country in upcoming weeks.

As of last weekend, only Ukrainians with British citizen family members could freely apply for sanctuary in Britain.

The Tories were forced to concede on this, having previously refused to relax visa restrictions.

But they still made it difficult for Ukrainians to come to Britain.

Their main visa application centre in Kiev has been shut. A centre for family members of British nationals remained open in the city of Lviv, over 350 miles away.

The narrow definition of family member included a spouse or civil partner, an unmarried partner who has cohabitated for at least two years, and some parents.

Some temporary measures were put in place to extend visas for Ukrainians in Britain whose visas will soon expire.

Standard visas, which cost up to £95 for six months, were also open, but did not include fleeing war among the list of acceptable reasons for applying.

And these are only granted if applicants plan to return home after six months.

Cost

Longer visit visas were available—but can cost from £361 for two years to £822 for ten. That's on top of fast-track, processing and appointment fees.

The government did not waive fees for family members of non-British citizens living in Britain, or those who can't afford them.

The Labour Party made a show of expressing outrage against Boris Johnson and home secretary Priti Patel for not relaxing restrictions further for Ukrainian refugees.

But it doesn't extend its outrage to

the Nationality and Border bill currently going through parliament that seeks to make it harder for refugees to enter Britain.

It's just one example of how the crisis is exposing the hypocrisy and double standards of Europe's border controls.

Africans and other international citizens in Ukraine have found themselves being blocked from leaving the country.

One father of three said the driver and military officers on board one bus made his family and others leave after telling them "no blacks".

Around 24 Jamaican students who arrived in Lviv from Kharkiv in Ukraine were forced to walk 12 miles to Poland. They were blocked from a bus carrying students to Poland.

Poland is being applauded for allowing Ukrainian refugees in, without restrictions, documentation or visas, unlike Britain.

Freeze

But for months its border has blocked refugees from across the Middle East trying to cross from Belarus, leaving them to freeze to death in forests.

In Britain, the Tories could be forced into concessions and into relaxing some rules to allow more refugees in.

This goes against their determination to make Britain as hostile as possible to migrants and refugees. And it contradicts their anti-refugee Borders and Nationality Bill

But already the partial U-turn is more than Syrian, Iraqi, Afghan, Somali, Yemeni and other refugees fleeing Britain's wars have experienced.

The Tories' hypocrisy will also be on display if boats of "undocumented" Ukrainian refugees begin to cross the Channel. Anti-racists must demand the Tories open the borders to everyone who wants to come to Britain—wherever they're from, and whatever their reason.

Join the Stand up to Racism demonstrations in London and Glasgow on 19 March and Cardiff on 20 March. For details go to bit.ly/SUTRfor22

A NIGERIAN family at the border with Poland. African migrants have been blocked from travel

'No fly zone' is recipe for a bigger war

SOME TORIES have demanded a "no-fly zone" to prevent Russian military aircraft operating over Ukraine. It sounds like an alternative to war, but it's a precursor to a wider conflict.

Former cabinet minister David Davis said, "It is far too late to get boots on the ground but it is not too late to provide air support to the Ukrainian army."

And the chair of the Commons Defence Committee, Tobias Ellwood, said "We've now got to assist Ukraine militarily, and look to see how that can be done."

"Whether it be with our weapon systems, a no-fly zone, we need to be far more

front-footed on this." Such statements underline that no-fly zones, blockades and similar manoeuvres lead inevitably to armed confrontation and wider war.

The establishment of a no-fly zone over Libya in 2011 was the first step in a much wider war.

The only exception is where the opponent is very weak compared to the Western forces—such as when Britain, the US and France imposed them over Iraq from 1991 to 2003.

These led to over 1,000 Iraqi civilian deaths from bombing and prepared the ground for disastrous future invasion.

British government officials

privately admitted the West used the zones to weaken Iraq's air defence systems instead of the stated aim of defending ordinary people.

But in the case of Ukraine a no-fly zone would have to be imposed on a massive Russian force, and would lead swiftly to fighting.

Even British defence Secretary Ben Wallace admitted it would mean putting "British fighter jets directly against Russian fighter jets," and "Nato would have to effectively declare war on Russia because that's what you would do."

Nobody on the left should be pulled behind such ideas.

Who deserves a boycott?

CULTURAL and sporting boycotts are designed to turn Russia into an international pariah.

For example, the Fifa and Uefa football authorities have banned Russian clubs and national teams from all competitions "until further notice".

Even the Eurovision

song contest has barred Russia.

Ordinary people's revulsion at the Russian invasion is entirely reasonable.

But there's gross hypocrisy at work here. England wasn't ejected from the World Cup after invading Iraq and Afghanistan. And the authorities

resolutely oppose calls for sporting sanctions against Israel.

Why is one invader sanctioned and another is not?

There was a furore against Ben and Jerry's last year for refusing to sell Ice Cream in West Bank settlements, with implications that it was antisemitic.

How sanctions will punish people all over the world

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

HARD sanctions against Russia will hit ordinary people and are driving the ferment of war.

The US and its Western allies have agreed to impose curbs on the Russian central bank, stopping it using its reserves of foreign currencies. This has led to massive inflationary pressures in Russia.

And the West has removed a group of the country's lenders from the Swift messaging system—which is crucial for global payments.

Yet most of the criticism of the sanctions is that they don't go far enough.

We don't need more "effective" measures against Russia's population—that are never applied against the West for its imperial wars.

Oil and gas prices are likely to soar if the

conflict continues. Germany blocked approval for the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline last week.

This caused benchmark gas prices in Europe to shoot up by as much as 13 percent.

And the disruption to world trade will hit some of the poorest people in the world.

Food

The price of food has already risen sharply in the last two years because of the pandemic.

Between April 2020 and December 2021, the price of wheat increased 80 percent, according to data from the International Monetary Fund. That was on a par with rising costs for corn and higher than increases for soybeans or coffee.

With the conflict food prices are set to soar even further. As World Trade Organisation director general Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said,

"There will be a big impact with respect to wheat prices and prices of bread for ordinary people."

Together Ukraine and Russia produce about a quarter of the world's wheat. About 12 percent of wheat and 13 percent of corn production comes from Ukraine.

Exports of grain from Russia will likely be on hold or face delays, according to the Russian Union of Grain Exporters.

The delay will greatly impact large buyers of grain from the Black Sea. This primarily includes countries in the Middle East and Africa.

The Tunisian government is already beginning to look into importing wheat from elsewhere.

And in Egypt, which imports 50 percent of its wheat from Russia and 30 percent from Ukraine, delays could see ordinary people go hungry.

President Zelensky is no clean break from corruption

UKRAINIAN president Volodymyr Zelensky is being branded as a "national hero" for his efforts in defending his country against Russian invasion. He also called himself Russia's "number one target".

Some media outlets are fondly reminiscing on his previous career as a comedian and actor—including voicing the Ukrainian version of the Paddington film.

Defeats for the Russians in Ukraine will be welcome. But that shouldn't prettify Zelensky's history.

Zelensky played the role of a school teacher who unexpectedly became president in a 2015 television series. By 2019 he had won the presidency with his new party Servant of the People, named after his show.

He ran on a manifesto of ending corruption in politics, promising to "clean-up" the government.

Two months into

his presidency he was caught in allegations of corruption involving then US president Donald Trump.

That scandal ended with Trump an impeachment trial.

As one of the first acts of his presidency, Zelensky appointed Andriy Bohdan as head of the Presidential Administration of Ukraine. Bohdan was the lawyer of a Ukrainian oligarch.

Under laws surrounding corruption in Ukraine, Bohdan was not entitled to hold any state office until 2024.

Zelensky also came under criticism for lack of transparency on a trip to Oman in January 2020, despite having criticised previous leaders for their secret trips.

He faced further scandal when the Pandora Papers were revealed last October. Despite his "anti-corruption" manifesto, he and his closest advisors owned

a network of offshore companies in the British Virgin Islands, Cyprus and Belize.

His anti-Russia and Vladimir Putin stance hardened after these allegations and anger over his handling of the pandemic.

Socialist Worker
WHAT WE THINK

IMPERIAL WAR TO CLASS WAR—RAGE AT OUR RULERS

RUSSIA'S horrific invasion of Ukraine has detonated a tonne of hypocrisy. Bombings, displaced people and deaths are the dreadful consequences of any military invasion.

But as Western nations denounce the inhumanity of Russian president Vladimir Putin, it seems they have forgotten the blood on their own hands.

Western forces have butchered countless civilians in Syria, Somalia, Yemen and Iraq to name a few. Just six months ago the US and Britain fled Afghanistan after 20 years of death and brutality caused by their greed and imperialist interests.

Now Western politicians salute Ukrainian resistance—while branding resistance to their own invasions as "terrorism". And they denounce the bravery of Palestinians resisting the Israeli military machine.

Their warnings over Russia's deadly thermobaric or nuclear weapons glides over the fact that the West has an abundance of both these weapons. The US used thermobaric bombs—which suck the air out of people's lungs—in its war in Afghanistan. Under the

guise of national pride rulers want to rally up troops to fight for their cause. British foreign secretary Liz Truss even said Britain "absolutely backs" people travelling to Ukraine to fight.

Yet prison—and even Guantanamo Bay—awaited people accused of travelling to fight in Syria or Afghanistan

For all their warmongering the Tories refuse to acknowledge the human cost of war. Home secretary Priti Patel has rejected demands to offer a full visa waiver to Ukrainians.

Patel claims security checks must stay in place for fear of extremists and Russian agents posing as refugees. The stench of

“We can’t let the war bury the desperate need for a fightback against Johnson

A CATASTROPHIC SYSTEM

THE ENDLESS drive to war, deadly pandemics and climate collapse are all symptoms of the same sick system.

A report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released this week paints a grim picture of the future.

It finds that climate change is already having devastating consequences far worse than predicted, and the window of time to act is rapidly closing.

"Any further delay in concerted

global action will miss a brief and rapidly closing window to secure a liveable future," warns the report.

The IPCC says that new technology, the bosses' favourite solution to climate change, will not only not be enough but could make the crisis worse.

It is a sobering message. Only system change will save us from climate breakdown.

The system's defenders try to isolate the Ukraine war from everything else. But the catastrophes capitalism brings are

hypocrisy from Tory and Labour Party MPs in support of open borders reeks. They are happy to slam the borders shut on African and Middle Eastern refugees.

The threat of war gives our rulers an excuse to pretend we're united in common cause. That's why the danger of Putin and good grace of the West is pumped out at every turn.

At the same time they continue with bitter class assaults, from fuel price rises to tax increases, to benefit and pension cuts.

Only weeks ago Johnson looked set for the sack as he made it clear he has had no interest in the lives of ordinary people.

We can't let the war bury the desperate need for a fightback.

If anything, increased spending on the military and weaponry will be used to justify cuts and austerity.

So just as we oppose any escalation in Ukraine, so we should mount an urgent battle over the cost of living.

Socialists must reject the Russian invasion of Ukraine. But we must firmly stand against our own rulers who feed us the myth that we're all in it together. Their lies only hide their own hypocrisy.

ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS



Fight imperialism—the real cause of war

“IN THEIR rush for profit, for wealth, the two gigantic imperialist powers are threatening the existence of world civilisation, are threatening humanity with the terrible suffering of atomic war.”

“The interests of the working class, of humanity, demand that neither of the imperialist world powers be supported, but that both be struggled against. The battle-cry of the real, genuine socialists today must be: ‘Neither Washington nor Moscow, but International Socialism.’”

This concludes *The Struggle of the Powers*, an article by Tony Cliff from November 1950. Cliff had just founded a tiny revolutionary socialist group from which the current Socialist Workers Party and its global sister organisations in the International Socialist Tendency developed.

Cliff was writing about the Korean War of 1950-53 when the United States and its allies fought North Korea and China. Behind them was the Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union.

Cliff had already developed the theory of state capitalism. He argued that the USSR was nothing to do with socialism, but a variant of the same capitalist system prevailing in the West.

The dominant forces in the ruling Communist Party used their control over the state-controlled economy to exploit the workers and peasants. Cliff argued in *The Struggle of the Powers* that the USSR was an imperialist state exploiting the countries it had occupied at the end of the Second World War.

The Cold War between the US and the USSR was thus an inter-imperialist conflict—a “struggle for the re-division of the globe”. This was similar to the disastrous contest between Germany and Britain in the first half of the 20th century.

Hence the slogan with which Cliff concluded the article, “Neither Washington nor Moscow, but International Socialism.” This “battle-cry” guided us through the Cold War. It meant we weren’t demoralised when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 because we understood that a state capitalist power had fallen.

Existence

Remarkably Cliff’s slogan fits our present situation today. One where “two gigantic imperialist powers are threatening the existence of world civilisation, are threatening humanity with the terrible suffering of atomic war”.

Of course there are important differences. Russia is a much weaker power today than the old Soviet Union.

President Vladimir Putin reacted to the West’s use of its control of finance markets to impose economic sanctions. He announced he was putting his nuclear arsenal on alert because, aside from energy, it is Russia’s main asset. The real challenger to the US today is China.

How one fights imperialism depends on where one is.

Cliff wrote a biography of the great Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin. Lenin denounced the First World War when it broke out in August 1914 as an inter-imperialist war.

But he also argued that the real test of a revolutionary in such a war was whether they stood out against their own side.

Lenin was contemptuous of socialists who concentrated their denunciations on the other side. This ranged from German socialists who condemned Russian autocracy, to British and French socialists who waxed indignant about Prussian militarism. He praised the German revolutionaries Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht for opposing in the first instance their own government.

In the face of the present war in Ukraine we must denounce Russian imperialism and the brutal invasion it has mounted. We must also demand that Russian troops are withdrawn immediately.

But in Britain this is cheap talk, most people will agree. It’s very different for the brave Russians who are also raising these demands.

We can never forget that we are socialists in Britain—the most loyal and belligerent major ally of US imperialism. We mustn’t be afraid to say that the US and its allies helped to create the conditions for this disaster.

They pushed NATO close to Russia’s borders when Putin was weak. They allowed pro-Western Ukrainian nationalists to entertain the fantasy that they could join, feeding Putin’s resentment and paranoia.

The more people understand about the real causes of the war the bigger the movement we can build against the imperialist system itself.

LABOUR LEADER Keir Starmer supports war in Ukraine

Starmer backs war as Labour left MPs’ opposition crumbles

by NICK CLARK

THERE’S NO room for anybody in the Labour Party who isn’t fully behind Nato, the West, and its role in driving towards war in Ukraine.

That’s the message Labour leader Keir Starmer sent after threatening to expel anti-war MPs, before staging a takeover of the party’s youth wing.

For Starmer, the war in Ukraine has been an opportunity to show how fervently Labour supports Nato.

At every moment he has galloped to make sure Labour stays to the right of the Tories.

Boris Johnson announced sanctions on Russia, so Starmer demanded those sanctions be tougher.

Johnson announced tougher sanctions, so Starmer called on him to flood Ukraine with weapons and ban the Russian state-owned RT news network.

Labour’s role at every step has been to fuel the sort of escalation that can only lead to more fighting—and more misery for ordinary people in Ukraine.

Dissent is not allowed. Only 11 Labour Party MPs signed a Stop The War Coalition statement criticising Nato for its role in driving towards war.

The statement began by condemning Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. It

also—correctly—pointed out that the war was a product of Nato’s expansion into eastern Europe.

The most it calls for is no eastward expansion of Nato and a “return to diplomacy.” But it was too much for Starmer. In his Labour Party, you either back Nato all the way or you’re out.

Names

So Starmer demanded all 11 take their names off the statement or would no longer be allowed to sit in parliament as Labour MPs. Within one hour, every single one of them had done as they were told.

Their names are John

McDonnell, Richard Burgon, Diane Abbott, Ian Lavery, Beth Winter, Zarah Sultana, Bell Ribeiro-Addy, Apsana Begum, Mick Whitley, Tahir Ali and Ian Mearns. Their retreat is a defining moment for the Labour left.

Ever since Starmer replaced Jeremy Corbyn as leader, those MPs have called on their members to stay in to fight the Labour right.

They promised to be a beacon for left wing politics inside Labour—but that they needed party members’ support.

As it turns out, staying in Labour actually means surrendering at the first sign of confrontation.

Rather than lead Labour members in fighting for left wing politics, those MPs have shown they will abandon them instead.

In the wake of their surrender the Labour Party took over the Twitter account of Young Labour, which had criticised Nato.

Labour members in local party organisations can likely expect similar treatment if they dare raise anti-war politics in their meetings.

The Labour left’s answer to every question is that the most important thing is to stay inside Labour. But if that means staying silent over war in a party committed to Nato, it’s surely better to leave.

Corbyn is abandoned by his comrades

THE LABOUR left’s surrender is a sign of things to come.

Jeremy Corbyn remains suspended as a Labour MP and the party will likely try to stand a candidate against him at the next general election.

In an interview last Sunday Labour’s shadow foreign secretary David Lammy demanded that Corbyn also remove his name from the Stop the War statement.

Lammy added that Labour has no plans

to reinstate him as a Labour MP.

He said that the left should be proud of Labour’s “instrumental” role in setting up Nato.

Siding

And he said criticising Nato meant siding with Russian president Vladimir Putin.

“No member of parliament in a free democratic system like ours should sign up to that agenda that is effectively his,” he said. In other words,

Labour now demands that Corbyn turns his back on the anti-war, anti-Nato politics.

Corbyn has so far refused—but will the other left wing MPs back him against a right wing Labour candidate?

When Labour suspended Corbyn in 2020, Labour’s other left wing MPs chose not to resign or rebel in solidarity with him.

Once again, they backed down in favour of remaining in Starmer’s Labour.

Energy bills set to soar as fat cats rake it in

THE COST of living crisis took a new turn this week as fuel firms said the war in Ukraine could drive prices even higher than predicted.

Filthy rich energy companies are already writing to millions of people to tell them that average home energy bills could soar to as much as £2,000 a year from April—a rise of 54 percent.

Energy analysts now warn the war is raising wholesale fuel prices and could send household bills rocketing by a further £1,000 a year.

The threat of rising bills is already spreading fear among people on low incomes.

Jane, a pensioner in east London, told Socialist Worker she is already turning off her heating—despite feeling the cold.

“My supplier said my bills would rise £200 a year. That’s a lot of money to me,” she said.

“I’m already turning the heating off when the sun comes out and wearing an extra layer of clothing.

“But I find it very disheartening when I hear of the energy company’s profits going up. It makes you feel unimportant.”

Jane is right to be angry.

This week Centrica, the firm that owns British Gas, announced that its operating profits rose by 112 percent to £948 million in 2021.

And its bosses are laughing all the way to the bank.

“We were both surprised and not surprised by what we woke up to this morning. This is absolutely unprecedented,” gloated Chris O’Shea, Centrica’s chief executive.

But for nine million low income families, there’s no such “good news”.

After below-inflation increases in Universal Credit and other benefits they will be £500 a year worse off. Pensioner couples will lose £540 a year.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation noted that the government used an inflation figure of just 3.1 percent when calculating benefit rate

risers. The Retail Price Index rate of inflation is now 7.8 percent and is predicted to rise still further.

The losses come just months after the £1,000 a year cut to households on Universal Credit when the £20 a week Covid top-up was axed.

Soaring bills are not the only part of the cost of living crisis.

Average yearly pay rises last year were just 2.1 percent in the private sector and just 1.5 percent in the public sector, according to the Labour Research Department.

The government is again planning below inflation pay rises for millions of workers. It announced last week that NHS staff would be offered just three percent, while others could face even lower “rises”.

And the Tories are looking to claw in still more money by hitting students too.

Students

Students in England will have to pay back university loans over 40 years instead of 30 under “reforms” designed to save the treasury billions of pounds.

Extending the repayment period will mean the majority of lower and middle income earners will keep paying for more years, increasing their debt by thousands of pounds. They could still be repaying their loans up to their retirement.

But the highest earners, those that can clear their debt within 30 years, won’t be impacted at all.

Trade union leaders ought to meet the daily drip feed of attacks on working class living standards with a wave of fury. But so far all we are getting from most are strongly worded press releases.

That makes every small scale strike for better pay even more important.

The more we can show anger from below, the more pressure we can put on those above.

The People’s Assembly has called a series of cost of living local protests for this Saturday, 5 March. Go to thepeoplesassembly.org.uk

NHS

NHS WORKERS across Britain joined health campaigners in a Day of Action for the NHS last weekend. Protests were called by the SOS NHS umbrella group, which is demanding a

pay rise for all health staff—and an injection of emergency cash into the NHS. The government last week announced that it will offer NHS employees a rise of just three percent.

Striking Chep workers must use their anger and unity to win further action

STRIKERS AT Chep UK in Trafford Park, Manchester are continuing their all-out strike against a derisory pay offer.

They have been boosted by a solidarity rally and an increased vote for strikes in a second ballot.

Management offered new talks, but nothing serious in the way of a decent pay rise.

The strike now needs to look at turning their determination into further action to keep up the momentum from the recent thumping ballot result. The workers at Chep check and fix pallets that are then sent to places like nearby Heineken brewers to use for deliveries.

Approaches to workers there to stop using Chep pallets would be one way to increase the



Workers at Chep UK fight for fair pay on the picket line.

pressure on bosses. Meanwhile strikers have braved recent storms and continue 24-hour picket lines. Visits from trade unionists and local activists are welcome. Bolton trades council

was set to join a a solidarity picket on Thursday.
Sue Caldwell

Tweet support to @unite_northwest Donations to Unity Bank NW/1 Strike Fund. Sort code 60-83-01 Account 20217873



Western forces still raining death on the world's poorest

While news headlines in the mainstream media are filled with news about the war taking place in Ukraine, **Sam Ord** reveals some of the terror the media keeps hidden

AS THE Ukraine crisis grabs the headlines, Western-backed wars rage on in Somalia, Palestine and Yemen.

These are the wars that are not deemed so outrageous, and where resistance is denounced rather than celebrated.

In Palestine, US Israeli soldiers unleashed a barrage of gunfire east of Deir el-Balah in Gaza on Sunday against Palestinian farmers.

On the same day four Palestinians were injured when Israeli soldiers attacked a peaceful protest at Luban e-Sharkiya in the West Bank.

Soldiers assaulted dozens of people protesting against provocation by Israeli settlers and soldiers. Many protesters suffocated from tear gas inhalation.

A week earlier hundreds of Palestinian school children were forced to miss school by settlers blocking entrances to the village.

The protest attempted to reestablish a safe and accessible route to the local school away from settler and soldier harassment and attacks.

The following day, the Israeli military marched into Gaza and destroyed farmland.

The soldiers were protecting four bulldozers and had four tanks to complete their mission.

Israel still maintains control of Gaza's borders, access to the sea and its airspace.

It has penned Palestinians inside the with a siege for more than 11 years, punctuated by horrific air and land assaults.

The siege has forced huge rates of poverty and unemployment onto Palestinians in Gaza, alongside shortages of electricity and other essentials.

Drone

In Somalia, east Africa, the US military conducted drone strikes last week.

The US has waged an alleged anti-terror war against the impoverished country for 15 years.

The US Africa Command said the strike targeted al-Shabab militants "after they attacked partner forces in a remote location near Duduble".

President Joe Biden continues his predecessors' escalation of the war, having struck the nation five times since he took office.

BACK STORY

An estimated 4.3 million people are affected by drought, made much worse by war, in Somalia.

● This number has doubled in just a year and led to over 500,000 people being displaced.

● Over 1.4 million children are suffering from malnutrition, and many thousands of these are suffering from acute malnutrition with their lives in peril.

● Cases of diarrhoea and cholera are also spiralling out of control. Basic measures could bring relief.

Last week's was the first strike since August last year.

The US spends billions on war while millions go hungry, according to the charity Save the Children.

A new report by the charity details how hundreds of thousands are being displaced as Somalia faces the most severe drought in ten years.

Rages

In Yemen, the Middle East, war rages on between Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Houthi rebels.

Western-backed Saudi airstrikes in residential areas killed at least one civilian and injured many more last week.

Seven children were killed just days before in more bombing campaigns.

Alongside the bombing, missile and artillery fire targeted many residential areas and ports. Gunfire and projectiles have hit the provinces of al-Jawf, Marib and Saada.

Saudi Arabia has escalated its bombardment of Yemen in recent weeks, targeting civilians and their essential infrastructure.

Saudi Arabia and its arms providers in the West are guilty of war crimes.

While leaders in the West claim to be the sole defenders of democracy, they wage war on some of the poorest countries in the world.



What's your story?

Email with your ideas
reports@socialistworker.co.uk

A DEMONSTRATION in Gaza City last month in support of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails

COVID

The ending of restrictions in Hong Kong should be a stark warning

SCIENTISTS ARE warning that Britain, and other countries that have axed all Covid protection measures, are putting millions of people at risk of serious illness and death.

Boris Johnson last week announced the ending of England's last remaining coronavirus rules. His diktat is being followed by Denmark and Norway.

Free testing is set to end within weeks, and virus surveillance programmes are being wound down.

Covid, according to right wing leaders, is history.

But professor Christina Pagel, from London's University College, said the "normal" life we are returning to will now be "shorter and sicker on average than before."

Pagel points out that the right's "living with Covid" pronouncements are based

on the idea that since vaccinations, the disease is now no more dangerous than seasonal flu.

"Covid has been and remains worse," she says.

"The proportion of people who die once they've caught it was initially about ten times higher than for flu.

"But it's still almost twice as high as for flu—and yes, this still holds for Omicron."

The impact of Covid is worse because it is so much more transmissible than flu.

Now that all measures to slow transmission have ended, the virus is much freer to spread.

Pagel says the pre-2020 world no longer exists, with many people facing "repeated Covid infections over the coming years".

With Covid now enjoying the freedom to mutate, the danger of new variants is high. And

there is no scientific basis for assuming that each new strain will be milder than the last.

Huge parts of the world remain mostly unvaccinated, while their health services and public health systems have been wrecked.

And the ability of Covid to strike countries with well-funded services should be a warning to those abandoning safety measures.

Hong Kong is in the grip of its worst wave of infections yet.

The state this week confirmed more than 34,000 daily cases and was forced into a city-wide lockdown.

The government had used a mobile phone app to track infections.

But it took this offline last year as the number of cases dropped and track and trace measures were abandoned.

Yuri Prasad

Protest at Jimmy Carr's 'joke'

JIMMY CARR has been met with a wave of anti-racist protests after making a racist "joke" about the deaths of tens of thousands of Roma and Sinti people during the Holocaust.

The supposed "joke" rests squarely on the vile and racist idea that targeting the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) community is acceptable.

Carr has since doubled down on his racism—publicly refusing to apologise despite widespread criticism.

Stand Up To Racism groups have protested and leafleted those attending Carr's shows.

In Cambridge the protest was up to a hundred strong at its height and included members of the local GRT community, trade unionists and students.

There was also support from Jewish Voice for Labour and local Labour councillors.

Placards carried the slogan, "The Holocaust is not a joking matter."

The venue was lit up with colour in solidarity with the GRT community.

The danger posed by Carr's statement was evident in a layer of hardened racists amongst his audience who were clearly emboldened.

There were also many attendees pleased to see a vocal anti-racist response.

Pressure from the protests has forced Carr's team to promise various venues that the deeply offensive material will not be repeated.

Mark Dink
Cambridge



ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

Brutal evictions show need to build against anti-GRT racism

IT WAS sickening to hear of the eviction of Gypsy, Roma, Traveller (GRT) families and the demolition of their homes last week by a local council.

Medway council in Kent mobilised bailiffs to destroy the homes on the land that the families own.

This was in front of distraught children who lived there.

The reports on the Kent Live news site go on to say that the council even failed to offer alternative accommodation, leaving the families with nowhere to go.

James Golby, who lived in the community says in the article, "We've tried to do the right thing by settling down and buying a little land, because it's illegal for us to travel at the side of the road like

our ancestors did, and they are still not happy with that. We're now homeless, we've got nowhere at all to go. We're not allowed to live, I think they'd rather us just be gone."

This is just a small piece of the ongoing war being waged against GRT people and their way of living.

Home Secretary, Priti Patel and the rest of the Conservative Party are pushing the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill which includes measures that allow authorities to snatch people's caravans.

This is made even worse as local councils fail to provide transit sites or allow permanent pitches.

According to the GRT organisation, Friends, Families and Travellers, there are just

59 permanent and 42 transit pitches available nationwide and over 1,696 households are on waiting lists.

Those who openly promote racism against GRT people don't even feel the need to use coded or dog whistle references, as the recent vile comments from Jimmy Carr show.

This is another one of the many reasons to build the biggest possible turnout for the international anti-racism day demonstrations on the 19 and 20 March.

We must build the campaign to push back against the tide of racism that Boris Johnson's government is promoting.

Martin Lynch
Walsall

Animal cruelty is part of post-Brexit Britain

JUST AS I thought the Conservative's vile policies couldn't get any worse, they plan to scrap the import and sale ban of foie gras.

Foie gras involves shoving a pipe down a goose or duck's neck and force-feeding it a mixture of corn and fat.

This apparently creates a better taste by depositing a large amount of fat in the animal's liver.

Foie gras is the worst end of mass scale factory

farming. If the price is right, cruelty to animals is allowed.

It's all part of the system that allows the wealthy to fox hunt, shoot grouse and do other barbaric "sports".

Jacob Rees-Mogg is the one behind this—it's a part of his vision of post-Brexit Britain. He doesn't want to ban things that upset his wealthy funders.

Emily Lloyd
Staffordshire

University students and workers unite

WORKERS AT 68 universities across Britain walked out on strike once more last month.

The main reasons for this are shrinking pensions, falling pay, and worsening conditions. UCU members were right to fight back.

For hundreds of thousands of students, we had ten days of no lectures, classes or tutoring. When we pay over £9,000 a year, it is a hit.

But all students should support and offer solidarity to our lecturers and professors on the picket

lines. For students it is important to understand that staff are on the picket lines because they have no other option, not because they want to.

It is the attacks from the university management that have forced us all into this situation. Lecturers are working much harder with much less.

It means the quality of education they can provide will decrease.

Teaching has often been described as a "labour of love".

We see how teaching staff

educate due to their passion and love for their chosen subject.

Their teaching conditions are our learning conditions. More unity against management is needed.

Matthew Ord
Liverpool

Just a thought...

Unity for the local elections

WHY CAN'T we form a new party based on the 2019 Labour Party manifesto?

There are enough people—over 200,000 have abandoned Labour. And the unions would support it.

The problem is we have three, or more alternatives. We need the SWP, Workers Party of Great Britain and TUSC to get together and start contesting local elections under one banner.

John Shale
Wigan

Tony Blair's Putin shame

IN 2000, just two weeks before the Russian presidential election, Tony Blair met Vladimir Putin.

This was when Russia was engaged in executions and rape in Chechnya—an area fighting for independence in east Europe.

Human Rights Watch said the visit was "absolutely the wrong signal". Blair excused Russian actions in Chechnya and said, "It is still right that Britain has a strong relationship with Russia."

A grateful Putin went on to "win" the election.

Chris Fuller
York

Tory donors is a key issue

THE ELITE board influencing the Tories (Socialist Worker, 23 February) is a mish-mash of corporate and corrupt businesses and wealthy individuals.

They control our policies, trade deals and public spending. This has always been our problem.

Rupert Murdoch and his media chums ensure we remain ignorant and Boris Johnson is in place to serve this all up to us in a joyful, British manner.

Marcia Kizwini
On Facebook

Poor work conditions

GOVERNMENTS let Getir's work conditions happen (Socialist Worker, 23 February).

It all contributes to sapping workers' rights.

Greg W
On Facebook

Ukraine and the Bolsheviks

UKRAINE, AND the range of ethnic groups it contained, were severely oppressed for hundreds of years under the Tsarist Russian empire. From 1720 the state moved to wipe out small linguistic communities and enforce the Russian language.

In contrast, the Bolsheviks were committed to breaking up the empire and supported the self-determination of oppressed nations.

But the circumstances of civil war that followed the 1917 revolution made their policy extremely difficult to implement in practice.

This was especially true as brutal reactionary forces in Ukraine united with invading imperialists in an attempt to overthrow the 1917 Revolution.

There were sharp divisions inside Ukraine.

Eastern Ukraine was mostly industrialised and dominated by the working class. It consisted of pro-Bolshevik, Russian speakers. The rural west was made up of peasants and classes that were suspicious of the revolution.

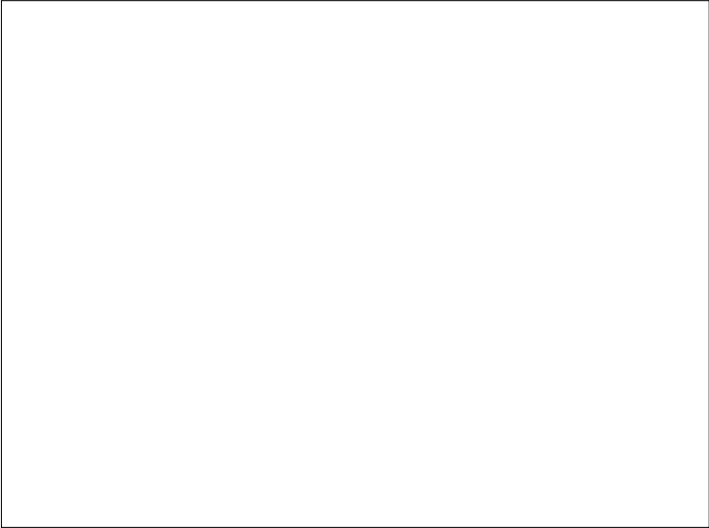
Following the 1917 February revolution, middle class Ukrainian nationalists created the Rada government. Come October it refused to recognise the Bolshevik, soviet government.

Intervened

Unable to rely on the Ukrainian people to build a workers' government, the Bolsheviks intervened militarily against the pro-imperialist Rada.

The Red Army led by Leon Trotsky—who was born in Ukraine—took control of the capital, Kiev in January 1918 and declared a Soviet Ukraine.

This brought about some important Ukrainian linguistic and education rights. Arguments continued over



whether Ukraine would become its own republic, or part of the Soviet Union.

The Rada looked to Germany for support. The Brest-Litovsk Treaty of March 1918 between Russia and Germany ended Russia's involvement in the First World War.

But it meant large swathes of Ukraine came under German control.

Following Germany's defeat in the war and mass resistance to its occupation, the Rada wrestled back some control.

It was supported by Poland and anti-Bolshevik groups. Others sided with White army counter-revolutionaries.

Yet support for the Red Army in Ukraine also grew, especially among Jewish people after a wave of antisemitic pogroms.

By spring 1919, the Red Army again took over Kiev and White army leaders were pushed out.

But soon war reemerged as Poland expanded its empire in 1921, grabbing large chunks of Ukraine.

The Red Army in the Ukrainian capital Kiev in 1919

Stalin reinvents chauvinism

AS EARLY as 1918 Joseph Stalin argued against Vladimir Lenin, saying, “the slogan of self-determination is outmoded and should be subordinated to the principles of socialism”.

Under Stalin's counter-revolution with the creation of the USSR, Ukraine's role was as “the Second Soviet Republic” after Russia.

The USSR focussed on building a unified nation with military and economic strength as part of state capitalist competition against other imperialist powers.

As part of the process it reimposed much of the repression that the Bolsheviks undid.

The progressive measures granting rights to minorities were no more by the late 1920s.

Commenting from exile in 1939 Trotsky wrote, “Not a trace remains of the former confidence and sympathy of the Western Ukrainian masses for the Kremlin.

“The worker and peasant masses in the Western Ukraine, in Bukovina, in the Carpatho-Ukraine are in a state of confusion. Where to turn? What to demand?”

Trotsky outlined how this led reactionary leaders to “sell the Ukrainian people to one imperialism

or another in return for a promise of fictitious independence.”

Ukraine's large agricultural lands were taken over to feed the USSR. Large coal and iron reserves saw the development of industrial complexes in Donbas, south-eastern Ukraine.

Stalin's regime prioritised rapid development in a short period to compete with Western powers at the cost of human life. Famine and the repression of peasants between 1932-3 killed an estimated 3.9 million people.

Quotas

Collectivisation replaced independently owned farms with state-run collectives as peasants were driven off their land.

Resistance led to arrests and deaths. Peasants were not allowed to receive grain until quotas were met, so starvation was used as a threat.

By 1932 Ukraine's agricultural productivity was estimated to miss targets by 60 percent.

According to a secret Soviet ministry of interior report between 1940 and 1953 571,000 people from Ukraine were deported to other parts of the USSR. Post-war famine also killed hundreds of thousands between 1946-47.

Mikhail Gorbachev in 1991 counting down the seconds before the collapse of the Soviet Union

Ukraine's history is scarred by repression, with imperialist powers using the region for their own gain. As the Russian invasion grabs more territory, Isabel Ringrose and Yuri Prasad look at the roots of this conflict

UKRAINE WAR AND REPRESSION

NATALI Sevriukova (left) is left in shock at the ruins of her house following a rocket attack on the city of Kiev last week

Vladimir Putin counts down the seconds to a new war with Ukraine

Neoliberalism and corruption

THE ECONOMIC destruction of Ukraine was accelerated by the global financial crash of 2008—and this was the context for the next wave of rebellions.

By the end of 2013 the central bank had only two months of foreign currency reserves left and was on the brink of defaulting on its loans.

Ukraine's rulers were now desperate for cash.

At the very last minute, rather than sign an agreement with the European Union, president Yanukovych turned to a backdoor deal with Russia.

The president was widely regarded as a Putin stooge, but one that toyed with the West. Having already been removed once by the “Orange Revolution” of 2004, he had been “re-elected” in 2010 in a process mired in fraud.

Yanukovych's move triggered the Maidan protests, taking their name from the occupied central Square in Kiev.

At first the movement was relatively small and based on students that wanted a close alignment with the European Union. They associated the corruption in Ukraine with the old Stalinism.

Protests became far larger and more politically varied after Yanukovych ordered a brutal crackdown using special troops, known as the Berkut.

Many of those that now joined the movement stated their opposition

to corruption and state violence, but were less clear on whether Ukraine should be aligned with the West or Russia.

Pro-Western politicians eager to direct the movement were quick to point out that support for a deal with the Nato military alliance and the European Union was greatest in the west of the country.

Russian speakers in the east and south of Ukraine were denounced as “colonisers” conspiring against Ukrainian culture.

It was in this atmosphere that far right groups grew rapidly.

Intrinsically

And just like his enemies, Putin too used ethnicity and nationalism as a means of division and rule. He talked of Ukraine being intrinsically part of Russia.

The Maidan movement forced Yanukovych on the run, fleeing to Russia in February 2014.

Less than a week later soldiers in uniform, without identification seized the Crimean parliament and cut Crimea from Ukraine. Then followed an independence referendum that allegedly garnered support from 97 percent of voters.

Crimea was effectively annexed by Putin.

That same spring, Russian-backed separatists in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine began to demand independence, leading to a war that has so far killed 14,000 people.

No to yet another carve up

PRESIDENT PUTIN'S decision to recognise the breakaway regions of Luhansk and Donetsk and to send in Russian troops is a deliberate attempt to break up and weaken the Ukrainian state.

He says Russian troops are on the ground with separatist forces because the rights of “ethnic Russians” in the east and south of Ukraine are under threat.

But that's not the real reason for Russian intervention. Putin wants to send a message that it will use its large military to keep control over what it describes as its “near abroad”.

Russian speakers in Ukraine indeed face state discrimination.

The Kiev government ruled in 2015 that Ukrainian is the only official language of the country. And it has scrapped laws that allowed schools in some regions to use Russian as an official second language.

Citizenship

Up to a quarter of the population of Luhansk and Donetsk regions, some 800,000 people, are said to have Russian citizenship. And two thirds of the inhabitants describe Russian as their “mother tongue”.

The restrictions on the Russian language are reactionary, but they are far from a humanitarian outrage.

Many people across the whole of Ukraine, including president Volodymyr Zelensky, continue to speak both languages—while many other Ukrainians also speak Hungarian, Romanian and Polish.

Putin's approach implies that

Ukraine should be broken up along linguistic and supposedly ethnic lines. That would seem utterly absurd to most people in Ukraine.

It's why surveys conducted by the Berlin's Centre for East European and International Studies in 2019 found that only about a third of inhabitants of Luhansk and Donetsk were keen to gain autonomy within Ukraine or Russia.

While about 20 percent said they wanted to return to how things were before the split.

Ukraine more than most countries has been created through the forced movement of people.

Since 2015 Ukraine has been among the ten countries with the largest internally displaced populations, with 1.8 million people forced to leave their homes.

And, more than one million refugees have been forced to flee to Russia. To carry on the imperialist process of carving up Ukraine will only lead to more misery.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women.

We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We oppose discrimination against disabled people including those who experience mental distress.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602

Socialist Workers Party meetings

Women, resistance and revolution

The real tradition of International Women's Day

ABERDEEN

Wed 9 Mar, 7.30pm
894-2628-7708

BIRMINGHAM

Wed 9 Mar, 7pm
The Priory Rooms, 40 Bull St, B4 6AF
281-634-5938

BLACK COUNTRY, SHROPSHIRE & STAFFORDSHIRE

Wed 9 Mar, 7.30pm
914-9548-1031

BRADFORD

Wed 9 Mar, 7pm
Bread + Roses, 14 N Parade, BD1 3HT
885-9187-7552

BRIGHTON & HOVE

Thu 10 Mar, 6.30pm
818-9286-5617

BRISTOL

Thu 10 Mar, 7.30pm
Kuumba Centre, 20 Hepburn Rd, St Paul's, BS2 8UD

CAMBRIDGE

Thu 10 Mar, 7.30pm
Friends Meeting House, 12 Jesus Ln, CB5 8BA
681-800-4408

CHESTERFIELD

Thu 10 Mar, 7pm
Assembly Rooms, 13/14 Chesterfield Rd, S40 1AR
828-532-8731

COVENTRY

Wed 9 Mar, 7.30pm
823-945-1917

DEVON & CORNWALL

Thu 10 Mar, 7.30pm
897 1685 8334

EDINBURGH

Wed 9 Mar, 7.30pm
431-459-112

GLASGOW

Thu 10 Mar, 7pm
Jims Bar, Queen Margaret Union, 22 University Gardens, G12 8QN

HARLOW

Thu 10 Mar, 7.30pm
832-8746-7480

HOME COUNTIES

Thu 10 Mar, 6.30pm
8341-170-103

KENT

Thu 10 Mar, 8.15pm
434-623-8064

LANCASTER AND MORECAMBE

Thu 10 Mar, 7pm
Friends Meeting House, LA1 1TX
992-204-9372

LEEDS

Thu 10 Mar, 7pm
The Swarthmore Education Centre, 2-7 Woodhouse Square, Woodhouse, LS3 1AD
881-4770-0676

LONDON: HACKNEY

Thu 10 Mar, 7.30pm
Halkevi Community Centre, 31-33 Dalston Ln, E8 3DF
832-8746-7480

LONDON: ISLINGTON

Tue 8 Mar 6.30pm
Elizabeth House, 2 Hurlock St, N5 1ED
854-8245-8715

LONDON: NEWHAM

Wed 9 Mar, 7pm
Stratford Advice Arcade, 107-109 The Grove, E15 1HP

LONDON: SOUTH

Wed 9 Mar, 7pm
497-196-1801

LONDON: SOUTH EAST

Thu 10 Mar, 7pm
529-913-6390

LONDON: TOWER HAMLETS

Wed 9 Mar, 7.30pm
818-391-0420

LONDON: WALTHAM FOREST

Wed 9 Mar, 7.30pm
William Morris Community Centre, 6-8 Greenleaf Rd, E17 6QQ

LONDON: WEST & NORTH WEST

Thu 10 Mar, 7.30pm
892-8966-5179

NORTH EAST SCOTLAND

Wed 9 Mar, 7.30pm
894-2628-7708

NORWICH

Wed 9 Mar, 7.30pm
Butterfly Cafe, 114A King St, NR1 1QE
906-652-5299

OXFORD & THAMES VALLEY

Wed 9 Mar, 7pm
861-2001-6477

PORTSMOUTH

Wed 9 Mar, 7.30pm
Somerstown Community Centre, Winston Churchill Ave, Southsea, PO5 4JJ
488-934-2809

SOUTHAMPTON

Thu 10 Mar, 7.30pm
434-623-8064

SWANSEA & WEST WALES

Thu 10 Mar, 7pm
Brynmill Community Centre, St Alban's Rd, Brynmill, SA2 0BP
914-9548-1031

YORK & SCARBOROUGH

Wed 9 Mar, 7.30pm
Spark, 17-21 Piccadilly, YO1 9PB
827-489-7492

HUDDERSFIELD

Anti-zionism, antisemitism and the fight for Palestinian liberation
Wed 9 Mar, 6.30pm
290 168 1804

MANCHESTER

50 years of Asian struggles in Britain
Wed 9 Mar, 7pm
323 178 7151

SHEFFIELD AND SOUTH YORKSHIRE

Is Green energy driving up bills?
Thu 10 Mar, 7pm
528-174-9278

WIGAN

Why we oppose imperialism and Nato escalation
Thu 10 Mar, 7pm
894-2628-7708

{ MOVEMENT EVENTS }

DORSET

Dorset against racism — a Stand Up To Racism public meeting
Thu 10 Mar, 7.30pm
820 9152 0251

CONTACT THE SWP

Phone
020 7840 5600
Email
enquiries@swp.org.uk

Post
PO Box 74955
London
E16 9EJ

The Socialist Workers Party continues to hold mostly online meetings during the pandemic. This ensures that there can still be collective and safe discussion, organising and actions. Occasionally branches will hold in-person meetings with precautions taken for a safe environment.

Most of the meetings will be held using the Zoom system. Download the Zoom app onto your phone or computer and just before the time given for your local meeting ask to "Join a meeting".

You can then enter the number printed on this page for the appropriate meeting. **The password for all meetings is 967537.**

Make sure you look at the SWP Facebook page [facebook.com/SocialistWorkersParty](https://www.facebook.com/SocialistWorkersParty) for news of national online meetings and other updates.



Sadness and a little bit of hope in pandemic sci-fi novel

The scenes conjured up in *How High We Go In The Dark* are like a troubled fever dream—but there’s gentleness and healing too, writes **Dave Sewell**

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL dig in the gaping crater opened up in Siberia by melting permafrost. A euthanasia theme park for terminally ill children. And a macabre hotel where the bereaved stage a final holiday with their loved ones’ corpses.

You have to hand it to Sequoia Nagamatsu, he knows how to craft a memorable setting.

His acclaimed debut novel *How High We Go in The Dark* is an intimate exploration of grief. It’s set within an epic over-arching tale of devastating, evolving plague and slow recovery.

Each chapter focuses on a different character facing up in their own way to the global crisis and their own loss within it.

A geneticist mourning his son forms a new connection with the pig he has bred to be an organ donor. A forensic biologist bonds through a shared love of rock music with the man who donates his plague-eaten body for her dissection.

Ashes

Robot dogs, limping into obsolescence, preserve the voices of the dead for their grieving families.

Funerary skyscrapers housing the ashes of a generation tower over towns cut into archipelagos by the rising sea.

Playful references to research and reinvented genre tropes swirl around tender emotional reflections.

These are the sort of dreams you might have if you fall asleep reading *New Scientist* with *Star Trek* on in the background after coming home alone from a loved one’s funeral.

The stories of several interconnected families are told across successive



SEQUOIA NAGAMATSU’S sleeping imagination seemingly has no boundaries

generations. These offer glimpses of what Japanese-American communities face in the US—exoticising stereotypes, racist scapegoating, and the memory of mass internment.

Though there is much of sadness, violence and darkness in this book, there is also a constant theme of healing.

Strained relationships are reappraised in a more empathetic light. Strangers find ways to reach out to each other across social isolation.

This all resonates powerfully in a world thrown into turmoil by a new disease under the shadow of climate breakdown.

Much of what became *How High We Go In The Dark* began as short stories written years before the Covid-19 pandemic.

This is personal reflection, not political allegory, and there’s no villain to speak of.

If this is to be the first major entry in the new canon of pandemic fiction,

it leaves room for tales a bit less sentimental and a lot more angry.

But Nagamatsu’s gentle epic can offer two things. A recognition of all the bewilderment, fear, frustration, loss and loneliness we’ve all had to bear since 2020. And a celebration of the resilience, imagination and solidarity that will see us through.

In other words, it sets the bar very high indeed.

How High We Go In The Dark by Sequoia Nagamatsu is out now

How Don Letts brought punks and dreads together

FILM

REBEL DREAD

In cinemas from Fri 4 March.
Go to rebel dread.com

REBEL DREAD is the story of Don Letts—DJ, film maker, and music and style trailblazer—who brought the worlds of punk and dub reggae together.

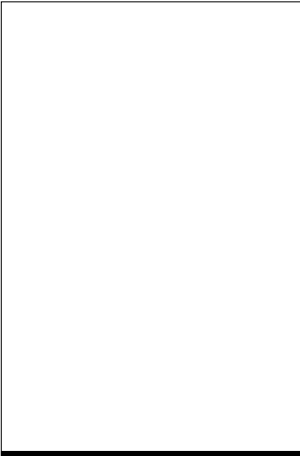
With interviews, photographs and archive footage Letts and the film makers paint an exciting picture of the melting pot of 1970s London—and in particular King’s Road,

Chelsea. Home to all manner of boutique clothes and record shops, it was a magnet for London’s many subcultures.

At the intersection of them all sat Letts.

He remembers working for punk stylists Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren in their shop on King’s Road.

But it was when he managed a shop himself, Acme Attractions—dub music constantly blaring—that he began to stitch those subcultures together. The shop became more like



The ‘Rebel Dread’—Don Letts

a social club, attracting punks, dreads and glam rockers alike.

For Letts, none of this can be separated from the “backdrop of social crisis in the 1970s—it was absolute turmoil. We were feeling the pressure on the streets, specifically under a law called sus which gave a policeman permission to pull up anybody they want to if they look suspicious.

“And of course everybody black ‘looked suspicious’.”

Letts has a proud joy in rebelling, whether fighting back against the police at

Notting Hill Carnival, or defiance through music.

In music, he found spaces that cut across racism. So when he started DJing at punk club The Roxy, he almost inadvertently brought together black and white people from two otherwise separate subcultures.

As his partner at the time Jeanette Lee remembers, “That scene made it easier for people to actually be friends with each other and communicate instead of in tribes.”

Nick Clark

EXHIBITION

OUT AND ABOUT! ARCHIVING LGBTQ+ HISTORY AT BISHOPSGATE INSTITUTE

At The Curve, The Barbican Centre, Silk Street, London EC2Y 8DS until Mon 21 March

BISHOPSGATE Institute stages a take-over of The Curve with an archive installation of objects, ephemera and media highlighting 40 moments and stories in London’s LGBT+ history.

Bishopsgate Institute has been collecting the lived experiences of everyday people for over a century.

Its unique special collections and archives present the stories of individuals, collectives and organisations who fought for social, political, and cultural change.

This archive installation includes items documenting areas of pride, protest, performance and art—from



Artefacts of liberation

the gay rights movement to the everyday celebrations and struggles of LGBT+ Londoners.

The installation will be accompanied by a programme of informal talks and conversations hosted inside the gallery by the individuals whose stories are on display.

EXHIBITION

POSTWAR MODERN NEW ART IN BRITAIN 1945-1965

At The Art Gallery, The Barbican Centre, Silk Street, London, EC2Y 8DS until Sun 26 June

POSTWAR Modern explores the art produced in Britain in the wake of the Second World War. Certainty was gone, and the aftershocks continued, but there was also hope for a better tomorrow. These conditions gave rise to a richness of imagery, forms and materials.

The exhibition reconsiders well-known figures. But it also foregrounds artists who came to Britain as refugees from the Nazis or as migrants from a crumbling empire. And it features women artists who have tended to be overlooked.

Whether it's against corrupt Russia, authoritarian China or “backward” Islamism, the West and its supporters have one story to justify and comfort themselves with.

It's that the West—for all its shortcomings, mistakes and excesses—has been the spearhead of progress, democracy and freedom in a hostile world.

And Nato, the US's military alliance, is the defensive force that preserves peace and protects this freedom from the malign forces that would destroy it.

That's the story Labour leader Keir Starmer told in his devotional article on Labour's support for Nato a few weeks ago. But it's one that people who might otherwise oppose war can find themselves accepting too.

When a reactionary, authoritarian regime in Russia invades a country friendly to the West, it can be tempting to try and decide which is the “lesser evil.”

Former left wing writer Paul Mason posed the war in Ukraine that way in an article for the New Statesman magazine arguing for support for Nato.

Disinformation

“We are in a global conflict between systems—democracy, science and the rule of law versus dictatorship, disinformation and armed anarchy,” he wrote.

In fact, the version of capitalism adopted by most of the West didn't come from any particularly enlightened thinking. Instead it was to do with sheer economic interest on behalf of the US—and profit for American industry.

The job of Nato in all this wasn't to defend democracy. It was to impose the US's will on the rest of the world after the Second World War—whether the world liked it or not.

After the war, the US emerged as the biggest global military, economic and political power.

It wanted markets to be dominated by US multinationals. But it couldn't do this by invading and occupying other countries, as the dying European empires had done before it.

Instead, it wanted to create new “free markets” built around US trade and industry, which it did through loans to European countries and by funding pro-US parties.

But it also faced a challenge from Russia, which saw its own industry best served by state control of economies in eastern Europe and across Asia.

So the ideological clash between the West and Russia was not about progressive democracy against reactionary authoritarianism. It represented

two competing visions for how capitalism should work.

The US propped its vision up by projecting its military power across Europe—and setting up Nato was a crucial part of this.

The idea was that this would not only stop Russia but also prevent Germany from re-emerging as a power in Europe that could challenge the US.

As Nato's first secretary general, the British officer Lord Ismay, put it, the point was



The supposed ‘peace’ that Nato brought was the militarisation of Europe

“to keep the Russians out, the Americans in and the Germans down.”

The supposed peace Nato's supporters claim this brought was actually the large scale militarisation of Europe.

US military power meant building an extensive network of bases across the continent—including one for nuclear armed bombers in Britain.

The Labour government at the time—now fered by Starmer and his supporters—allowed this

without even any agreement on how or when they would be used.

It didn't mean democracy or freedom either. For Britain and France, joining Nato and supporting the US was a way of clinging on to their empires' colonies.

No sooner had the Second World War ended than France began a bloody nine-year campaign to retake control of Indochina—now Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

France fought to crush Vietnam's anti-colonial insurgents with the same bloody methods that the US did in the 1960s and 70s—carpet bombings and massacres. It did it for the same reason too—to stop the growth of China as a challenge to the West's power.

That's why in 1952 a Nato resolution declared its “wholehearted admiration for the valiant and long continued struggle by the French forces” in Indochina.

“The campaign waged by the French Union forces in Indochina deserves continuing support from the Nato governments.”

In practice that meant, thanks to Nato, the US practically funded the whole colonial war. Then, when France faced defeat, the US got ready to intervene—and even considered offering France two atomic bombs.

FOR BRITAIN'S Labour government, Nato membership was at first about desperately trying to keep Britain as a power on a par with the US.

But even Nato members have to give in to the will of the US.

When Britain and France invaded Egypt in 1956 against the anti-colonial government, the US was outraged that they acted without its permission. It wanted France and Britain as its subordinates—and demanded they retreat.

After that, Britain accepted its role as the US's junior partner within Nato.

Every Nato member must submit to the project of US dominance. That—not democracy—is the key criteria for membership. Nato proved this from its outset when it welcomed the dictatorship of Portugal into its fold in 1949.

And Nato had no qualms about interfering—in dirty and violent ways—in its own members to see that this stayed the case.

Nato set up and supported a collection of secret underground armies in most of its members between 1949 and 1990.

It only admitted this in 1990—and said these “Gladio” networks were dormant “stay behind” forces designed to keep fighting after a Russian invasion.

Yet many of these had links to—or were made up of—Nazi and far right organisations and also targeted Communist

parties and the left. In Italy, the Gladio included several far right groups that carried out bombings and massacres.

The Greek Gladio and special forces networks joined the 1967 coup that installed a military dictatorship, which Nato then supported.

Nato's invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 probably did the most to expose what the alliance is really about.

Although, as ever, Nato used the fig leaves of “democracy” and “humanitarian intervention”, the war was nakedly about reasserting US control.

What's more, Nato's original reason for being—“protection” from Russia—had disappeared a decade earlier with the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Rather than disband, Nato reinvented itself. No longer was it simply about defending US power but projecting it further. It adopted a policy of “out of area operations” to do just that.

Balkans

For the first time, Nato forces were actively involved in bombing and invading other countries, starting almost immediately in the Balkans.

Nato said its series of bombing raids and “no-fly zones” on warring Balkan countries throughout the 1990s were about stopping ethnic cleansing.

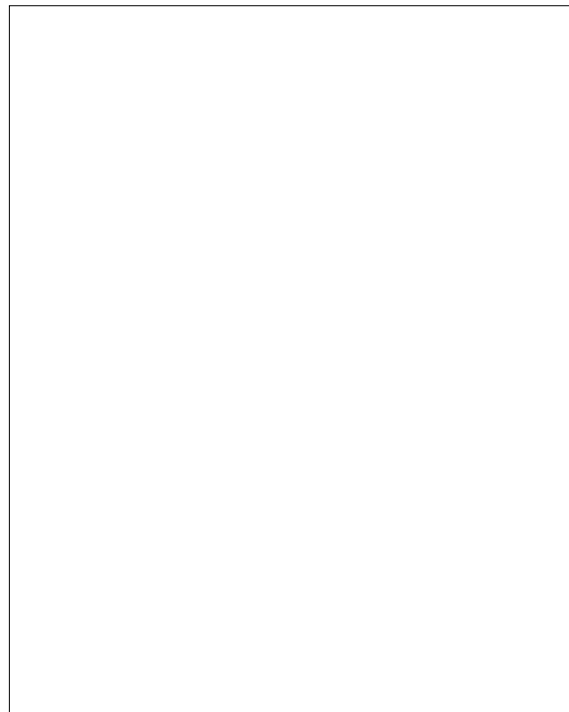
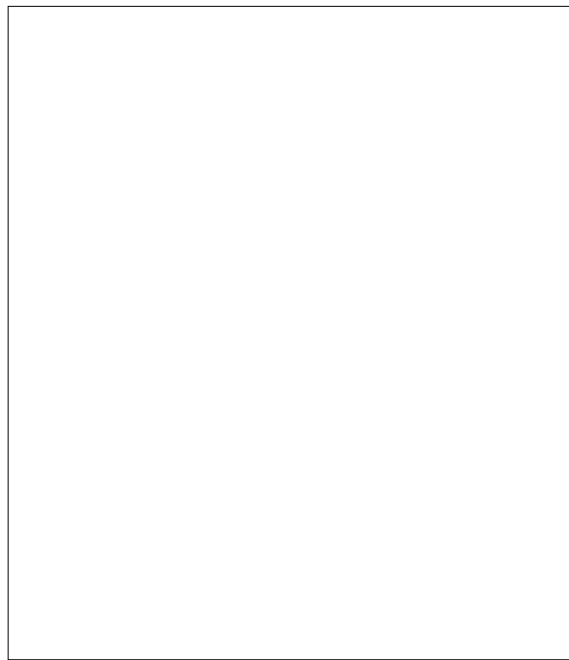
In reality, most of these were directed against Serb forces. That wasn't because the Serb governments were any worse than other groups. The US had decided backing the Serbs' opponents was the best way to extend its influence into a part of the world left open by the collapse of Russia.

A supposed deal proposed by the US between Albanian Kosovans and Serbs in 1999 demanded that Nato forces be allowed free run of Serbia and its resources.

As a US aide said at the time, “We intentionally set the bar too high for the Serbs to comply. They need some bombing, and that's what they're going to get.”

Nato's eleven week bombing campaign killed many hundreds of civilians, including with cluster bombs that spread out over vast areas.

Some of the people Nato killed were those it claimed to protect. One Nato airstrike on a refugee convoy killed 60 people. Its interventions in the Balkans fuelled and encouraged



US troops training with Nato in Poland (top) Folding the alliance flag as defeated Western forces leave Afghanistan (above)

waves of ethnic cleansing between Serbs and Albanians. But they were a step towards Nato's expansion into eastern Europe that has led to the war in Ukraine today.

Just as when Nato was founded, its clash with Russia is one of two powers competing for markets and political control in eastern Europe.

Nato's role in that competition hasn't brought peace or democracy—but war.

Any true socialist should stand up and oppose Nato and the system of imperialist rivalries that it represents.

READ MORE

● **Labour lies can't hide true history of Nato**
Socialist Worker article by Nick Clark
bit.ly/Labournato

● **Ukraine and imperialism — Alex Callinicos replies to Paul Mason**
bit.ly/paulmasonreply

● **Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism**
by Vladimir Lenin, £5.99 or at bit.ly/Highest0322

Available at Bookmarks, the socialist bookshop. Phone 020 7637 1848 or go to bookmarksbookshop.co.uk



COMMENT

Anti-union laws have stifled strikes—but can be beaten

Five years ago the Tories imposed harsh new anti-union laws. Charlie Kimber asks how effective they have been, and how they can be overcome

ON ONE level the laws imposed on 1 March 2017 did not achieve what the Tories wanted. The most far-reaching element of the legislation was that at least 50 percent of those eligible to vote had to take part.

This was in addition to a majority needing to be returned for strikes to go ahead.

The government estimated that 35 percent of ballots in important public services and 29 percent elsewhere would not reach the new turnout threshold. But the results were much better than that.

An article by Dave Lyddon in Industrial Relations Journal shows that “far fewer ballots now fail to win a simple majority. The 50 percent turnout barrier has led to only half the predicted losses”.

That's a tribute to the tireless work by activists who campaign for a vote and persuade workers to join the fightback. It's also a reflection of the impact of plummeting real pay and bosses' assaults such as fire and rehire.

But in two respects the laws have had a big effect. Firstly they have greatly reduced national strikes.

Task

It's one thing to win a 50 percent turnout among a few hundred or even a few thousand workers. It's a much bigger task to win it among hundreds of thousands of workers.

Without the turnout thresholds, there would probably have been national strikes during the last five years in schools, the civil service, the NHS, local government and perhaps others.

As the laws were passed union leaders made bellicose speeches about defying them. But in practice each one has meekly obeyed the

UNIVERSITY STRIKES show widespread action is possible

restrictions. The PCS civil service workers' union, for example, won a strike ballot with a 78 percent Yes vote in April 2019. But it was agonisingly 2 percent short of the turnout requirement and nothing happened.

Before 2017 it's almost certain the strike would have gone ahead.

The CWU Royal Mail ballots have shown that it's possible to have big turnouts. They beat the thresholds among over 100,000 voters in October 2017, October 2019 and March 2020.

But none of these led to strikes due to a combination of legal challenges—for campaigning too effectively—new offers from employers, and union leaders backing off.

The UCU university workers' union has managed strikes involving a big section of its national membership by having coordinated branch-by-branch votes. These fit their particular sector but aren't easy to generalise.

The second big effect is that, as always with anti-union laws, they have provided a further alibi

for union leaders to shrink from struggle. The typical pattern when facing a major issue is for union leaders to hold a consultative ballot.

If this comes back with, say, a 30 percent turnout then it's almost always the death knell for any talk of struggle.

But the union general secretary shrugs their shoulders and insists that the lack of response is not their fault. “I wanted to have a strike, but the members were too apathetic and too timid,” they say.

Militancy

This covers up the leaders' failure to encourage militancy, push solidarity or stand with the fighting activists at a local level.

The insulting pay offer last year to NHS workers is the most obvious example of where there should have been strikes. But the ballot turnout was below the threshold after leaders helped take the energy out of the movement then raised the flag of surrender.

Such examples underline that the laws will probably have to be confronted if there are to be generalised major struggles across Britain. But the impetus for that won't come from union leaders.

Activists in the unions have to push to win ballots, detonate struggles and back those who do fight—officially or unofficially.

The crucial break may well come from insurgent movements outside the mainstream trade union leaders and the Labour Party.



The laws will probably have to be defied to win generalised strikes

NATO HAS thousands of troops stationed across Europe—and the needs of US foreign policy decide what they do

WHY NATO IS AN ALLIANCE BUILT ON WAR

Support for the US has always been a condition of Nato membership. Nick Clark explores how the alliance was created by the West—and delivers war, not peace

Paul Mason

PICTURE: GUY SWALMAN

Marie Equi—women’s champion, class warrior

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

“QUEEN OF the Bolsheviks” and “most hated woman in the northwest” were names earned by American revolutionary doctor and fighter for women’s rights Marie Equi.

Equi was born in 1872 to two immigrant parents in New Bedford in Massachusetts, US. At just eight years old she began working in the city’s textile mills. She escaped this toil and moved with her girlfriend Bess Holcolm to Oregon.

During this period Equi trained to be a doctor.

After graduating in 1903 she set up a practice in Portland, Oregon, that specifically catered to the needs of working class women and children.

Despite abortion being illegal, Equi risked prosecution to provide this vital service to all women, no matter their social class.

She battled against reactionary ideas around sexuality and never hid that she was a lesbian. Together with her partner of 15 years Harriet Speckart, she adopted

a daughter. Equi threw herself into the growing suffrage movement and led the Portland Votes for Women march in 1912.

She was also on the executive board of the Progressive Party—the third party in the US for a short while.

At this time Equi was convinced reforming the system was the best way to win change. Her thinking was transformed in 1913 after joining fruit canning strikers.

The predominantly female workforce at the Oregon Packing Company struck over low wages, backed by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) union.

In June 1913 around 50 women walked out and were repressed by the police brutally. These events radicalised Equi.

She later wrote, “An Indian girl (Mrs O’Connor) got onto a box to speak. She was about to become a mother in a few months.

“The mounted police would leap from their horses’ backs, hitting the heads of working men in the crowd. When they pulled that girl from the

box—that was where I went wild.

“All the fighting blood rose in my heart. I got on the box and said things. They took the Indian girl to the courthouse. I followed and got in.”

Following the strike, Equi declared herself a socialist and committed herself to organising with progressive campaigns in Portland.

These ranged from action over homelessness, to the rights of unorganised and immigrant workers.

Politics

For Equi socialist politics were the tie that bound together the fight for better working conditions, housing and reproductive rights.

Equi’s politics also drove her to oppose imperialism as the US prepared to join the First World War.

After being arrested for counter-protesting at a march organised by the pro-war Preparedness Movement in Portland, she returned the next day.

To make sure her message was heard loud and clear she climbed a lamp-post and unveiled a banner

that read, “Down with imperialist war.” Equi’s anti-war politics brought her into direct conflict with the state. She was charged with sedition by the US government in 1918.

She used her trial to rail against the war.

The prosecutor exclaimed, “The red flag is floating over Russia, Germany, and a great part of Europe. Unless you put this woman in jail, I tell you it will float over the world.”

Equi spent almost a year in prison, which had a devastating impact on her health and activism. After suffering a heart attack in 1930 Equi died in 1952 at the age of 80.

One of her last acts of resistance was to loudly proclaim that she would still be known as the notorious Queen of the Bolsheviks.

With witch-hunts of supposed communists being built by the US state, the Portland police bureau released its own “red list”.

Equi demanded that her name be put at the top.

This is the second in a series of columns on radical women to coincide with International Women’s Day on 8 March. Go to bit.ly/RWL2022

**JOIN THE
SOCIALIST
WORKERS
PARTY**

- ☐ Yes, I'd like to be a member
☐ I'd like more information and to receive emails

Name
Address
Postcode
Phone
Email

Return to SWP membership department,
PO Box 74955 London E16 9EJ.
Or scan this QR code on your phone
Phone 020 7840 5602
Email membership@swp.org.uk



Subscribe to Socialist Worker

Have Socialist Worker delivered with your post every week for a direct debit of £5 a month

I want to subscribe to Socialist Worker with a monthly direct debit of £5

Name

Address

Postcode

E-mail

Phone

I would like ____ extra papers to sell
(this will not be deducted from my bank account)

For official use only—this is not part of the instructions to your bank/building society

Sherborne Publications,
PO Box 74955 London E16 9EJ

Instruction to your bank or building society to pay by direct debit

Originator identification no. 9 7 3 3 5 5

Our reference no.

.....

1. Name and full postal address of your bank or building society

To the manager:

Bank/building society

Address

Postcode

2. Name(s) of account holder(s)

.....

3. Branch sort code / /

4. Bank/building society account no.

.....

5. Instruction to your bank or building society
Please pay Sherborne Publications direct debits from the account detailed on this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the direct debit guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Sherborne Publications and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank or building society.

Signature(s)

Date

Banks and building societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions from some types of account



Direct debit guarantee

■ This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay Direct Debits.

■ If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit Sherborne Publications will notify you ten working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If you request Sherborne Publications to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request.

■ If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit by Sherborne Publications or your bank or building society you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society.

■ If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when Sherborne Publications asks you to.

■ You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.

Socialist Worker Subscriptions

Post PO Box 74955 London E16 9EJ
Phone 020 7840 5601
Web www.socialistworker.co.uk

Biggest ever strike by railway cleaners boosted by solidarity

Grossly underpaid workers show the bosses they have power by striking across London and the south east of England. **Sam Ord** says they are a force to be reckoned with

IN the largest ever rail cleaners' strike, hundreds of mostly migrant workers employed by outsourcing company Churchill walked out across London and south east England on Wednesday of last week.

They are fighting for a minimum wage of £15 an hour and better conditions.

The cleaners, members of the RMT union, won widespread support.

In a tremendous show of solidarity, not one worker went in at Temple Mills International depot in east London which serves Eurostar. Engineering staff—who had not been balloted to strike—joined the picket line.

Striker Serwaa, who is based at Victoria station in London, told *Socialist Worker*, “I’m glad my people are finally standing up for us.

Bonuses

“Working through the pandemic was terrible, we had no rest and were forced to come into work.

“Churchill was given more contracts, but we got no additional pay or bonuses. We got nothing for risking our lives—bosses got big bonuses.”

Speaking of their demands she added, “We keep the trains going and are treated unfairly.

“We deserve £15 an hour and free travel as well.”

Strikers are also calling for the same sick pay as people employed directly by the train companies. In a survey conducted by the RMT, 69



STRIKERS AT the office of Churchill's biggest shareholders in London last week

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

percent of Churchill's rail cleaners reported that they have gone into work while sick because they couldn't afford not to.

Some 30 strikers, mostly black people, raised their fists at Temple Mills depot in east London, where engineers refused to cross a cleaners' picket line. At a rally outside the

houses of parliament, around 100 cleaners were joined by MPs including Jeremy Corbyn and other trade unions including the CWU, GMB, UVW and IWGB.

Churchill cleaner and strike organiser Bella told *Socialist Worker*, “We're not going to let them bully us anymore. We are

going to continue fighting for £15 an hour, and we're going to get it.

“We have found strength in our unity, and I hope to see everyone back on the picket lines in the future.”

The Cleaners & Allied Independent Workers Union (Caiwu), which represents Churchill

cleaners outsourced to Facebook in London was also at the rally.

Caiwu general secretary Alberto Durango told *Socialist Worker*, “Today is an important show of solidarity. Because the RMT is on strike, our Churchill members won a small victory.

“Yesterday bosses gave good conditions to workers. There used to be just nine full time workers.

“Now there's 19 with some more part time. We also won the London living wage backdated to November.”

Enemy

Alberto described the mood among workers as “happy” but said that more has to be done.

“All the working class should be together to attack the common enemy,” he said.

There is plenty of money to pay Churchill rail cleaners a real living wage. Last year Directors of the Churchill Group of companies rewarded themselves with a dividend worth £3.8 million.

In the same year Churchill Contract Services Ltd made a profit of £11.1 million and paid a dividend of £12 million to its parent company. This could have easily paid for a £15 an hour wage.

Cleaner Hussain told *Socialist Worker*, “If we don't win after today we need more strikes and pickets. And everyone must get out because the bosses could replace us with agency workers.

“We're going to fight, and we're going to win.”

Coventry bin workers take their bitter anger to council bosses

“WE HAVE to win—there is no other option for us. We have to go back with a victory.” This is what determined Coventry bin striker David told *Socialist Worker*.

HGV drivers for Coventry council are on all-out strike over the council's refusal to improve their pay grade.

The Labour-led council has pumped out lies about the strikers' earnings. And it is now paying scab labour to undermine the strike.

None of the councillors supported by the workers' Unite union have attended talks with council bosses,

leading the union to move to cut its funding to them.

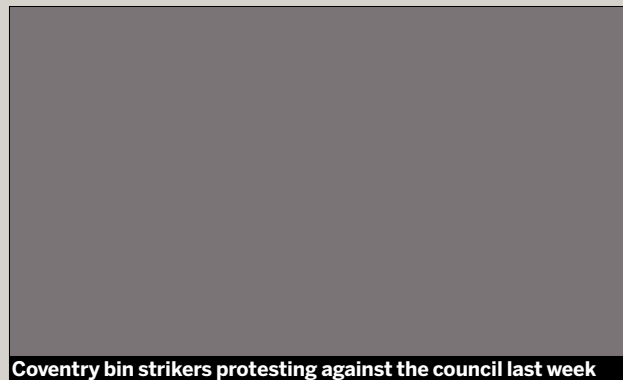
Striker Gurmit says the use of scab labour was the council's attempt to “break the strike”.

“They're not bothered about us they don't care, they want to stop us,” he said.

Battling

The scab labour is paid around £20 an hour, while the strikers are battling to win just £16.50 an hour.

Strikes marched from the Unite headquarters in Coventry on Tuesday to a rally outside the council building. Here they tried to confront Labour



Coventry bin strikers protesting against the council last week

councillors—who either ignored them or refused to listen to their anger. “Shame on you for turning blue,” they chanted.

Striker Anthony has

worked for the council for some 13 years. “The council won't talk to us or give us any decent offer round the table,” he told *Socialist Worker*.

“The council is Labour by name, Tory by nature.”

Striker Teresa told *Socialist Worker*, “It's difficult. With inflation going up we need more money. We receive £22,000 a year. It's nothing.”

Families

Gurmit added, “We have families. Food prices are going up, so it's important to have more money for the future.”

Strikers say they have had lots of solidarity from trade unions.

Teresa thinks the support is “opening a door” for other workers to start their own pay

battles. “The power is with the people—they have to come to the streets and ask for fair pay,” she says.

David says the strikers are confident. “Morale is really high. The money is there. They could've resolved this dispute on less than they're paying out for scab labour,” he says.

The Unite national leaders have to make sure this battle is won. And everyone needs to draw the lesson about Labour's shameful attitude.

Isabel Ringrose

Messages of support to Pete.Randle@unitethetheunion.org

PAY FIGHTS ROUND-UP

Two new pay fights set to start...

AS THE cost of living crisis sinks its teeth into food and energy bills and inflation soars to 7.8 percent, workers in the Unite union are fighting back.

Workers employed by GE Aviation Systems Limited's subsidiary company **Dowty Propellers** were set to strike this week over pay.

Over 90 workers based at the factory in Brockworth, Gloucestershire, rejected a two-year pay offer of 4.5 percent. Strikes were set to begin on Friday and continue for every Friday until 20 May.

And around 100 HGV drivers employed by catering firm **DO & CO at Heathrow** were set to strike on Friday and Saturday of this week over pay and conditions. Workers voted by 94 percent in favour of strikes after having no pay increase for 2021.

...and ballots could mean more to come

AROUND 100 workers and Unite union members at the **Fawley refinery** in Hampshire are balloting over a 2.5 percent pay offer for the next two years.

And 150 workers at **Riverside Bakery** in Nottingham are balloting over a pay offer that reduced overtime and premium rates.

Workers at **Eclipse Blinds** in Inchninnan, Scotland, are balloting for strikes over pay. The 50 workers rejected a 4.3 percent pay offer.

At the **Lerwick Port Authority** in the Shetland Islands workers are balloting over pay, overtime and conditions.

Over 270 workers at the **Sibc chemical plant** in Teesside are also voting for strikes after a two percent pay rise offer for 2022.

Cut makes sweet makers feel bitter

WORKERS HAVE voted to strike at the factory where Fox's Glacier Mints, Mint Humsbugs and Poppets are made.

GMB union members at sweet maker Valeo, in York, are ready to walk out in a dispute over terms and conditions.

Despite the cost of living crisis and rampant inflation, bosses have offered a below-inflation pay rise.

The lowest paid workers are also excluded from a one-off payment, while others are set to lose two days holiday a year.

Bosses have also told the GMB they want to end collective bargaining at the York site.

GMB officials were set to meet with members to discuss potential strike dates.

Katherine Mitchell, GMB organiser, said, "GMB members have kept the company and production going throughout the pandemic—all they are asking for is a fair deal."

ANTI-RACISM



PROTESTERS FIGHT a bill that affects half of all Asian British people

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

Hundreds protest over Tories' racist bill

by CHARLIE KIMBER

AS THE racist nationality and borders bill goes through its last stages in parliament, around 500 people marched in London on Sunday to call for its defeat.

A wide range of groups—including refugee support organisations, anti-racists, Sikh and Muslim organisations—backed the demo.

It marched from the Home Office to a rally in Parliament Square, with a strong sense of unity among all those who targeted by the new measures.

Lorry driver Randeep, told Socialist Worker, "We need to stand up and rise together. Not just one group but all of us."

The bill would also make it a criminal offence to arrive in Britain "without a valid entry clearance". But this is virtually impossible for those fleeing war, poverty and climate chaos.

The maximum sentence for arriving without all the required documents would be four years' imprisonment. Randeep added, "How is someone in Yemen or Ukraine supposed to check they have

all the visas before they flee for their lives? It is a guarantee of injustice."

The bill's Clause 9 extends the home secretary's powers to strip people of their British citizenship. Protester Sarah Clark-Menzies said, "This clause potentially affects the citizenship rights of almost half of all Asian British people and two in five black Britons."

"Up to six million people are left living in fear that if they get into any sort of trouble, whether they are guilty or not, they could be arrested, judged in secret and deported. It is specific, racist legislation."

The home secretary already has very broad powers that were extended under Labour in 2003 and 2006 and then under the Tories in 2014 and 2018.

Sabby Dhalu, co-convenor of Stand Up To Racism (SUTR), told a rally at the end of the march that the racist bill was a "grotesque attack" that will "undermine all our rights".

She added that it was an outrage that "black people in Ukraine are being prevented from boarding trains leaving the country. We need to fight for everyone's right to asylum."

Dhalu invited everyone to join the anti-racist demonstrations in London, Glasgow and Cardiff on 19 and 20 March.

The Scottish and Welsh administrations have both recently passed motions saying they are against the nationality and borders bill. But that will not stop it from being applied to Scotland and Wales.

If the Scottish and Welsh governments are serious they must refuse to comply with the home office, set up defence for the bill's victims, and welcome all refugees.

Over 100 people joined a rally against the bill in Halifax on Sunday. It was called by the St Augustine's Centre in Halifax, along with Migrants Organise, backed by Stand Up to Racism from Calderdale and Kirklees and by Calderdale TUC, as well as a group of LGBT+ campaigners and Labour figures.

The mood was militant, with a clear message that refugees are welcome here and always will be.

●For details of the SUTR demos go to bit.ly/SUTRfor22
Thanks to Roger Keely

EDUCATION

New round of action in schools pension fight

WORKERS AT private schools run by the Girls Day School Trust (GDST) were set to strike for a third time between Tuesday and Thursday of this week.

The latest round of action comes after another three day strike by over 1,500 NEU union members at 23 GDST schools last week a day of strikes before half term.

Strikers are fighting to protect their membership of the Teachers' Pension Scheme and against their bosses' fire and rehire assault.

Bosses want to force teachers onto a worse scheme that would cut pensions by at least 20 percent on average each year.

Striker Sara told Socialist Worker, "GDST teachers have never struck before, but we understand that attacks on our pensions and fire and rehire threats would create a brain drain and an inability to recruit

additional teachers."

She said GDST's top boss Cheryl Giovannoni, "has caused this and must listen to our voice and withdraw her plans."

Strikers last Wednesday were joined by workers at Forest School in east London, who are fighting for pensions in a parallel dispute.

Since the first strike date, GDST bosses have offered teachers £2,000 and the ability to stay in the pension scheme—but only until September 2023.

John Richardson, NEU national officer for the independent sector, described this as a "bribe".

"They say they don't have any money but found a £2,000 bribe to give up your contractual rights."

"We say, 'keep your bribe'," he said.

The teachers are determined to win—and escalating is the best way to do that.

PAY

Vote for action in Scotland

SCOTTISH college teachers have voted resoundingly for industrial action over a pay offer that would leave most thousands of pounds worse off.

Members of the EIS union voted by 71 percent for strikes in an indicative ballot.

An even higher number—88 percent—voted for additional forms of action, on a turnout of 64 percent.

The bosses' pay offer is well below inflation.

And with workloads and massive stress due to the pandemic, teachers were infuriated by a £150 one-off payment offer that bosses hoped would sway opinion.

The Scottish government talks about the colleges being central to recovery from Covid.

In reality it has cut their funding, and the employers are hiding behind this.

So the union will launch a statutory ballot soon, timed to see strikes beginning in the run-up to the May council elections.
Donny Gluckstein

●WORKERS AT Bobby Moore school in Newham, east London were set to strike over workload and conditions on Thursday of this week.

The NEU union members voted to strike after having to do dinner duties, cover lessons and much more additional work.

TRANSPORT

CLEANERS

West Coast train cleaners stage new two day strike

OVER 20 strikers picketed outside the Alstom Train care depot in Manchester on Saturday—the start of their latest 48-hour pay strike. Cleaners on the West Coast line working for Atalian Servest services are striking over pay.

"We worked through the pandemic, but there's no appreciation from them," striking worker Sandra told Socialist Worker.

"The more you do, the more they want."

The strikers, members of the RMT union, were angry about the £10.8 million in pandemic support funds that Atalian claimed. They said it "went straight to a Luxembourg bank."

Other pickets took place at over a dozen more depots including Birmingham, London, Glasgow, Crewe and Preston.

More strikes are set to take place between Thursday and Saturday of next week.
Mike Killian

LONDON UNDERGROUND

Night fight still going

NIGHT TUBE strikes on the Central and Victoria lines continue in a fight to protect the specific grade.

Bosses want to force Underground drivers to work a combination of night and day shifts instead of keeping a separate role for Night Tube drivers.

But getting other drivers to work Night tube shifts will destroy workers' work-life balance.

Strikes are set to continue every Friday and Saturday night.

STAGECOACH

A month of bus strikes is set for south west England

OVER 380 bus drivers employed by Stagecoach West based throughout Gloucestershire and Wiltshire have announced a month long strike for pay.

The strike is set to last from Thursday of next week to 9 April causing disruption throughout the counties. And it will hit the Cheltenham festival, which Stagecoach holds a contract for.

Many drivers are paid under £11 an hour—but bosses have only made tiny

pay offers. It is the first time ever that the drivers—members of the Unite union—have voted to strike.

There is plenty of money available to offer workers a pay rise. Company accounts reveal that the group made profits over £58 million and has £875 million available.

Workers have won pay rises on other Stagecoach services—they have the power to win and shouldn't settle for watered-down deals.

HEALTH WORKERS

Barts workers need victory, not retreats

by ISABEL RINGROSE

THE UNITE union has suspended strikes planned for this week at Barts NHS Trust to hold talks with bosses.

The outsourced cleaners, porters, security guards and kitchen workers employed by Serco struck for two weeks last month before returning to work for two weeks.

The mainly black and Asian workers are employed at St Barts, Royal London and Whipps Cross hospitals.

They are presently paid up to 15 percent less than directly employed NHS staff.

Serco last week unveiled a 25 percent jump in profits, fattened by its government handouts for pandemic services and a rebound in its leisure and transport businesses.

It reported a pre-tax profit of £192 million in 2021, up from £153 million the previous year.

There was also a big payout for shareholders who can look forward to a 15 percent increase in the final dividend.

So it's 15 percent for those



BARTS WORKERS, who struck last month, deserve a 15 percent rise

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

who grab unearned income, but far from 15 percent for those who do the work.

Unite had announced another two weeks of strikes set to begin on Monday.

Management had made only loose promises at talks.

But after they offered more talks, Unite called off the strikes.

The Barts Trust board was

set to meet on Wednesday this week to decide whether they will take the workers in house after Serco's contract ends in spring 2023.

Bosses would have been under much more pressure if the strikes had gone ahead as planned.

It was a mistake to call them off. Ruthless employers don't respond to weakness.

Unite regional officer, Tabusam Ahmed said, "Unless the board makes the right decision the workers will intensify their campaign against exploitation."

If bosses again fail to deliver justice, Unite must escalate to all out strikes.

●Demonstrate Wed 2 March, 11am, Royal London Hospital, Whitechapel Rd, London E1 1FR

LONDON UNDERGROUND

Tube strikers battle for jobs and safety

>>>continued from back page

are prepared to escalate their fight and return to the picket lines. Striker Chris, who has worked on the Tube for 15 years, told Socialist Worker, "The government is playing games and taking it out on the unions."

"This strike will undoubtedly get a strong message to them."

"When you sign up for a job, you know what you're getting."

"After working 20 or 30 years you deserve a good pension. We have to strike because they're taking it away from us due to mismanagement."

The strike includes engineers and cleaners, who are often outsourced. Roy is a rep for cleaners based in North Greenwich employed

by outsourcer ABM.

He told Socialist Worker, "We were all told that we were essential workers. We put our lives at risk to clean contact points—we didn't stay at home."

"We didn't get any compensation or good equipment."

"The situation now is that we have no free travel, no good pay, we work harder, there's less staff and we get no sick pay for Covid related illness."

Other Tube workers' unions, such as Aslef and TSSA, have not called their members out on strike, although some workers didn't cross picket lines.

Peter added, "This is the first shot in a long dispute. We will be on picket lines again and we need the other Tube unions to join us."

PRINTING

Action after victimisation

PRINTERS IN the Unite union at Envases Liverpool Ltd are preparing for 12 days of strikes following the dismissal of the union's rep.

Unite believes that John Williams was dismissed on false charges as a direct consequence of him standing up for the

Unite members at the factory.

Envases had sought to use misleading information

and a false statement to try to drive a wedge between Unite and another union at the factory.

After Williams exposed the company's actions he was dismissed.

Envases produces tin plate containers and drums.

The first strikes are set for Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday next week and then 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23, 28, 29 and 30 March.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Strikes by Unite coming in some local councils

SECTIONS OF the Unite union's local government members will stage targeted industrial action at councils in England and Wales this month.

They have rejected a 1.75 percent pay offer in a ballot of more than 300 local authorities.

More than 80 percent of Unite's 70,000 members, who voted in nearly 400 separate ballots, were in favour of industrial action

The union said that the employers' offer was and remains "completely unacceptable", given that the RPI rate of inflation has raced ahead to 7.8 per cent.

A list of councils, where the legal threshold for industrial action has been met and where action will be taken, will be unveiled soon.

Unite general secretary

Sharon Graham said, "Unite's message to the Local Government Employers is your offer is completely unacceptable, think again and put a proper pay rise to our members."

"Our members have the full support of their union as they get ready to take industrial action in the spring."

Unite national officer Jim Kennedy said, "We had an excellent turnout with some 82 percent of those voting supporting action, reflecting our members' disgust at the offer."

Unite is demanding a 10 percent pay rise for council workers—who have experienced a real terms pay cut of 22 percent over the last 11 years.

A Unison union ballot did not meet the threshold under the anti-union laws.

GLASGOW

Strike votes in Glasgow?

THE RESULTS of a ballot by Glasgow council workers involved in a long-running equal pay battle were set to be announced as Socialist Worker went to press.

Members of the Unison, GMB and Unite unions could walk out for the second time over the council's sexist pay grades.

Thousands of workers struck for two days in Britain's largest equal pay strike for decades in 2018.

The strike forced Glasgow City Council to agree £500 million in compensation payments to the predominantly low-paid women workers.

But now the council is dragging its feet in implementing the new pay scheme.

A Yes vote for action must be followed by hard-hitting action.

PAY

TUC calls Blackpool pay demo

THE TUC union federation has called a demonstration in Blackpool as the Conservative party holds its spring conference.

Organisers say, "Everything's going up but our pay."

"Families are bracing themselves for the Conservatives' cost of living storm to hit."

"This government has had 12 years to get wages rising and they have failed, over and over again."

"Join us in Blackpool to say loud and clear—Britain needs a pay rise!"

●Demonstrate Saturday 19 March, assemble from 10am, march start 11am. Comedy Carpet, Tower Festival Headland, Promenade Blackpool, FY1 1AP.

●Sign up for updates at tuc.org.uk/sign-demo

ENVIRONMENT

Fury at Silvertown tunnel

AROUND 300 people rallied outside the new City Hall in Newham, east London, last Saturday in a cry to stop the highly polluting Silvertown Tunnel.

The proposed four lane tunnel that will span the River Thames to Greenwich will include a dedicated lane for HGVs.

Scientists and health professionals have warned the development will make air pollution in the two boroughs significantly worse.

Local doctor, Laura Jane told Socialist Worker, "The climate crisis is a health crisis and air pollution exemplifies this starkly."

"I don't want more of my patients to needlessly suffer harm from toxic air."

"Air pollution affects everyone causing asthma attacks, cancers, heart attacks, strokes and dementia."

Protesters chanted, "What do we want? Climate

justice" and many carried placards reading, "Climate refugees are welcome here," and "We need clean air."

Many trade unions including the NEU, TSSA Unite branches joined the demonstration.

And several Labour Party and Extinction Rebellion groups were also present.

Newham is one of the most diverse London boroughs.

It is also one of the most deprived.

Half of children across the borough live in poverty and 30 percent of local jobs don't pay the London Living Wage.

The tunnel will make life much worse, increasing health, traffic and environmental problems.

But resistance can increase the pressure to halt the £2 billion project and invest in better, public travel infrastructure.

●For more on the campaign go to stopstiltonn.com
Sam Ord

UNI STRIKERS SAY STEP UP THE ACTION

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

WORKERS at 63 universities took to picket lines on Monday to fight against heavy workloads and precarious contracts, for better pay, and against inequalities.

Strikers joined large picket lines and protests in cities such as Bristol and Leeds.

UCU union members have struck for at total of 11 days over the “four fights”, or pensions, or both.

Several student groups have continued occupations of university buildings in solidarity with the strikers. Students were also set to converge in London for a “strike and teach in” called by the NUS student union on Wednesday this week.

There was support from the Wimbledon branch of the RMT union—preparing for their own strikes on the London Underground—at Kingston university, south west London on Monday.

And Tube strikers and UCU members were together on some pickets on Tuesday.

But many UCU members are frustrated with how union leaders are running the strikes. Carlo Morelli is UCU Dundee university branch

WIMBLEDON RMT and Battersea & Wandsworth Trades Council show solidarity with Kingston UCU

co-chair and a former UCU negotiator over pensions.

He said that the lack of democracy in the union is becoming a pressing issue.

“There was a Higher Education Committee (HEC) on Friday where the possibility of more action was talked about. Thankfully a motion to suspend all strikes was

voted down,” he told Socialist Worker.

“But one plan that would see more escalation came to a tie after the proposer of the motion was not given the right to vote for it after experiencing connection issues.”

Carlo added that strikers don’t know precisely what the HEC decided. “But we

have heard enough to say that these plans fall short of what’s needed to guarantee a win,” he explained.

“Union members must keep fighting for more democracy.

“We want the union to listen. We need more meetings where branch delegates are allowed their say.”

The UCU Left group, which

Socialist Worker supports, added, “We face a serious attack on our union and our members are putting themselves on the line.

“Any failure of nerve by our union’s leadership threatens to severely weaken our ability to resist.

“It’s crucial that UCU members take control of our

disputes. Higher education sector conferences have been called for April, but this is far too late.

“That’s why we are encouraging every branch to pass a motion calling for an urgent special higher education sector conference (Shesc).”

One branch that has called for a Shesc is the Royal College of Art (RCA) in west London. Workers there are fighting as part of the national dispute and a local one over workloads and precarious contracts.

Demands

A member of the RCA strike committee told Socialist Worker that the university has already conceded to some of their demands.

“Management has been forced to agree that those already working at the RCA and those who join in the future will receive the same terms,” she explained from the picket line.

“But we have to continue. The university has a plan to restructure that will impact our teaching. They still haven’t told us what this restructuring will mean for staff.”

The striker was clear about what is needed in the national dispute. “It’s simple. We need to escalate strikes before the ballot ends.”

London tube strikers in a battle for jobs, pensions and passengers’ safety

by SAM ORD

WIDESPREAD strikes brought the London Underground network to a halt on Tuesday.

Thousands of workers in the RMT union launched a wave of action to defend 600 jobs and prevent attacks on pensions and working conditions.

The attacks are part of the government “deliberately engineering a financial crisis to

drive a cuts agenda,” according to RMT.

Transport for London (TfL) has been offered a “rescue deal” that demands a further £400 million in cuts on top of the £508 million to be made by March 2023.

RMT has also called out London Underground’s pay grades. As the dispute covers all grades, any worker on the TfL network in the RMT can strike.

Peter, a tube worker picketing at Stratford



Strikers picketing in Brixton, south London

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

in east London, told Socialist Worker, “They’re making us pay the price of the pandemic.

“Around 10 percent of frontline workers going will make travel less safe for passengers, will give more work to the rest of us and people will be shifted to other stations.”

He added, “Every job matters—even just one job cut matters. It affects us all.”

Tube workers are showing defiance by

striking, especially as they have come under immense backlash from bosses’ organisations.

Tube bosses are quick to blame the workers for disrupting the economy post-pandemic and hitting the network’s income. But this is a crisis driven from the top.

Another 24-hour strike was set for Thursday of this week.

Much more action will be needed, but strikers >>>continued on page 19